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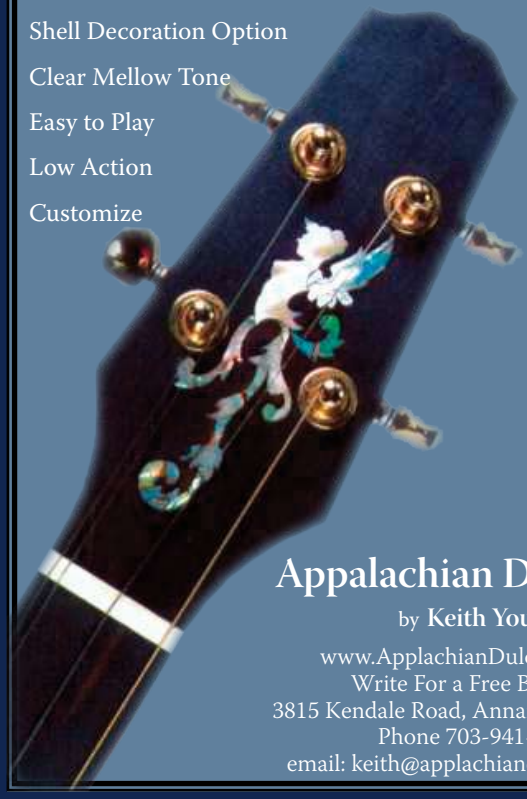

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In This Issue

Community

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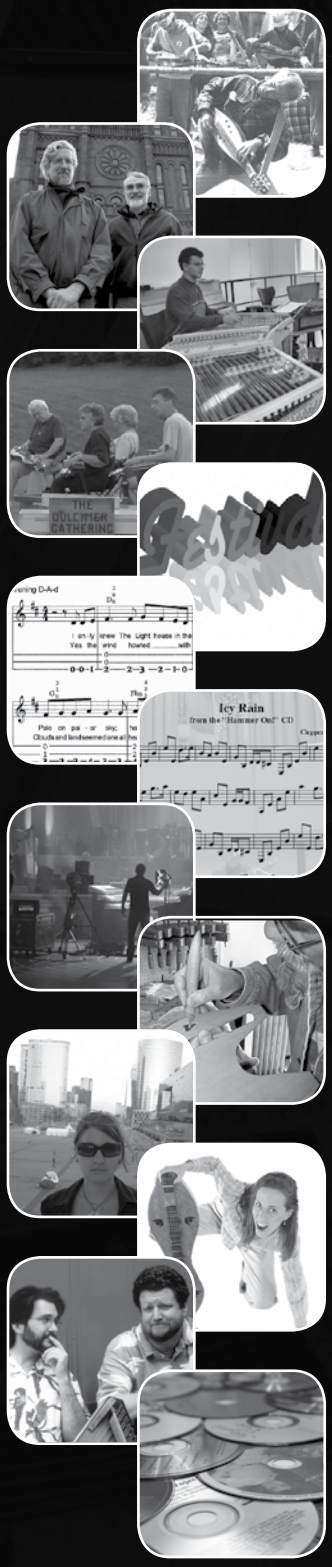

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Editor's Desk

Dear Readers:

"Four sips of water. Two books." The notation, in my handwriting, on a paint sample card found in my desk was confusing. I was going through DPN items to send to Tennessee along with Dan and Angie Landrum, and that sample of blue shades including the notation brought a "Huh?" to my voice. Then I remembered. I'd had an idea for a Dear Readers subject and had tucked the jotted-on card into my desk for future reference.

Speaking of futures, they are about to grow after our journey together for more than thirty years. Our dulcimer adventures will continue and will expand in Dan and Angie's hands, and our instruments will always inspire us. Dulcimer players, I thank you for sharing your stories with me and other DPN readers throughout the years. You mean more to me than I could ever tell you.

Dan and Angie have wonderful ideas, and I look forward to learning even more from you as the years pass. I've told them, and I tell you, that Dulcimer Players News will always be in my heart. I'm here to help however I can.

My plans are to perform and teach more now that publishing deadlines have eased. If you are interested, be sure to ask me to tell you what "Four sips of water. Two books." means when I see you on the road!

In harmony,
Maddie MacNeil

Dear Readers,

Take a second look at the cover. Did you notice Maddie's face in the center? This placement is something she certainly would have avoided as editor of Dulcimer Players News, but it is where she's been and where she belongs.

Circling out from the hub of Maddie's centeredness is a spinning platter of diversity in music and ideas. Issue after issue she's been there, quietly pushing and pulling players, builders, writers, historians, photographers, editors, artists, typographers and printers to finish the task. She somehow managed to do this and still leave contributors feeling hugged, rather than corraled.

We're all indebted to Maddie for the fine work she's completed. I haven't learned the meaning of her "Four sips…" yet, but I'll never forget four other important words she told me, "Never miss an issue." This is, of course, my goal, but I hold an even higher ambition, which is to produce a magazine worthy of Madeline MacNeil's legacy.

I hope you enjoy the colorful additions to this issue and will never hesitate to pass along your ideas and concerns regarding DPN. You'll find our new contact information on page one. Please update your address books and stay in touch.

Play on,
Dan Landrum

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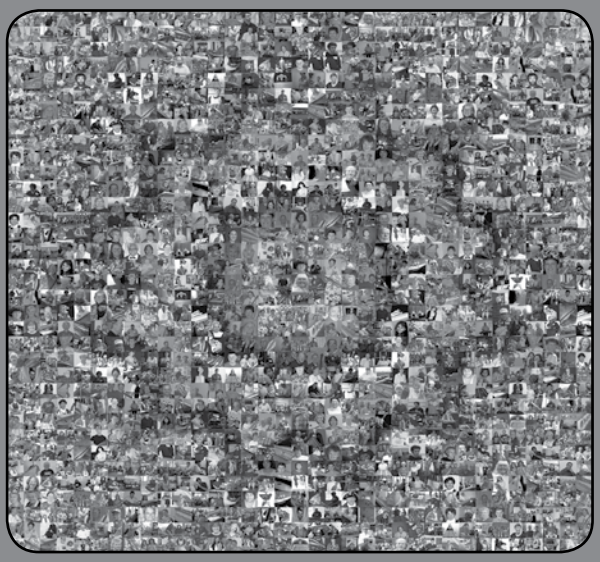

About the Cover: What would a group photo of the whole dulcimer community look like? What if you could gather together every mountain dulcimer player, hammered dulcimer player, builder, and festival organizer from all corners of the world? We emailed every dulcimer person we could think of, and generated this mosaic from the hundreds of photos we received. The dulcimer community looks wonderful to us! Thank you for the tremendous response! - Christie Burns

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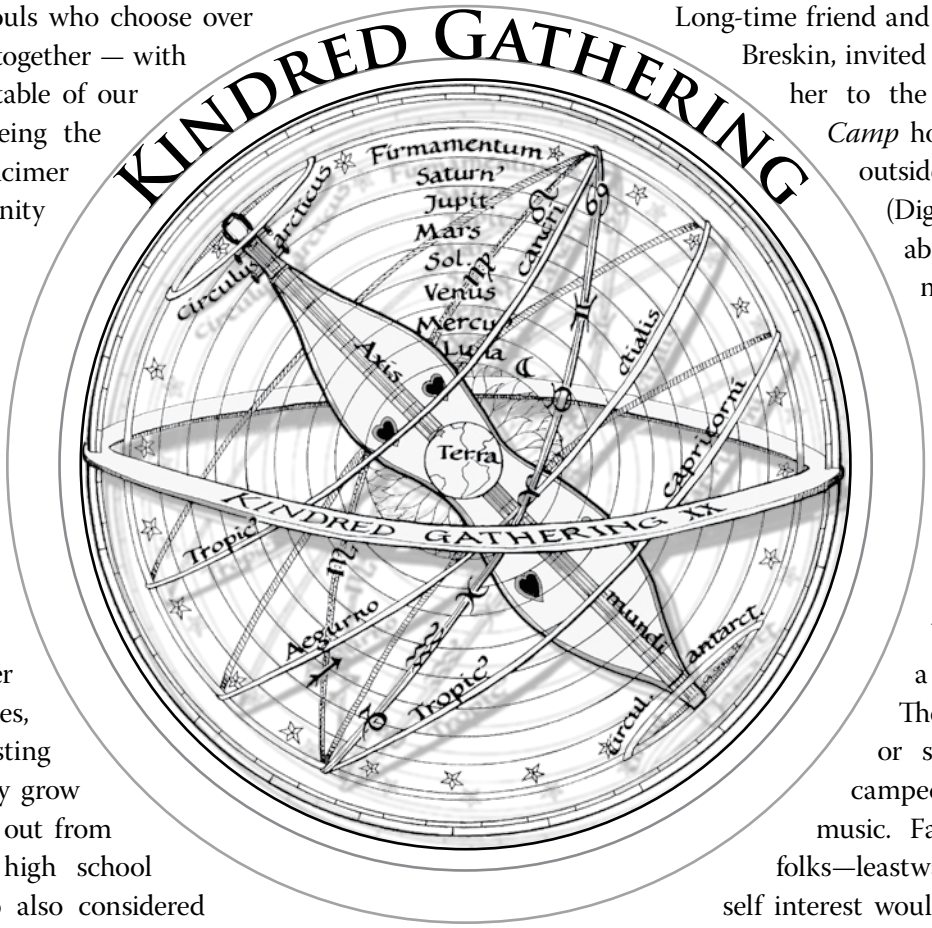
Community

by Robert Force

As I sit, hands poised above the keyboard, I am finding it is hard to write about something as close to me as is the *Kindred Gathering*. I thought it would be easy, but it isn't. The murmur of voices and the images of faces of friends, some now passed, overwhelm me as I am constantly being dragged away from the task at hand, awash in a parade of the sights and sounds of friendship and remembrance. You see, it is not an event I am writing about, but rather a living, breathing, changing company of souls who choose over and over again to come together — with the centerpiece on the table of our common expectation being the humble mountain dulcimer and the desire for community through music.



Over these past thirty-two years some KG friends have died and new KG friends have been born, the latter literally as well as figuratively. Like any group of people, as we go about concerning ourselves for one another through marriages, divorces, in laughter, in sorrow, trusting and caring, we inevitably grow together. Now peeking out from dusty memory is my high school psychology teacher who also considered himself a bit of a philosopher. At least twice a week he would admonish the class, "What you are going to be, you are now becoming!" Maybe that's what any of this is all about. It's about the journey, not the destination.

I write these observations with a gentle caveat: I am just one viewpoint, one narrator. But I can tell the story of how and why the KG came to be. I was there at these beginnings. And I'm still there, lovingly wrapped up in a rich mosaic that overlays my yesterdays with my todays. So it is with everyone who has been at a *Kindred Gathering*—each creating and living their own unique set of experiences and perceptions. Some ideas brought us together; some experiences keep us together.

It was the spring of 1975. Albert d'Ossché and I had just returned to the Northwest after the previous winter's East Coast debut tour for *In Search of the Wild Dulcimer.* Long-time friend and fellow musician, Flip Breskin, invited us to ride along with her to the *Sweet's Mill Music Camp* hosted by Virgil Bixby outside of Fresno, California. (Digging around the net about California folk music history you will find that Virgil and Sweet's Mill was a virtual parallel universe nexus — a crossroads — the genesis and sustainer of many West Coast folk beginnings.) It was a musician's retreat. There were no audiences or stages. People came, camped out and played music. Famous folks were just folks—leastways as much as their self interest would allow them, which was usually most of the time or they weren't the kind of person who would come to a place like this in the first place.

There was no overt or apparent organization. There were no fees. The casual hand of serendipity, or fate, or happenstance appeared to quite effectively rule the event—if it even can be called that. There were no clocks, no timetables, no classes. And yet people found each other, learned from each other,

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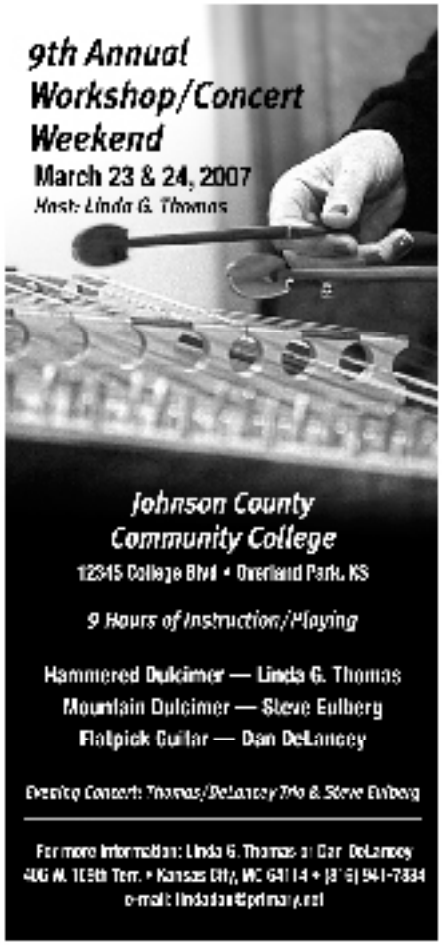
enjoyed one another, and either relaxed or challenged themselves by some arcane, mysterious process that reflected Life itself. Fascinating. Life as music; music as Life. Albert and I were struck not only by effectiveness and simplicity of *Sweet's Mill* for encouraging and supporting folk music, but we also appreciated that people like ourselves who were on a performer/artist pathway would eventually need places to go to just be themselves and be able to play music away from any pretense of the fame game.

On the ride back up we brainstormed about what it would be like to gather together folks interested in just the dulcimer. We had a location: *Alexander's by the Sea Artist's Guild*, where I, and my wife-one-day-to-be, Janette, lived and built dulcimers. Meanwhile, back on the East Coast, Maddie McNeil had just published the first issue of *Dulcimer Player's News*. Here was a vehicle, we thought, to reach other players and we sent her a flyer upon which was a hand-drawn invitation to: "A North Pacific Rim Kindred Gathering—a meeting for friends of modes and dulcimerie in Search of the Wild Dulcimer—a gratia Dei". The only other information besides directions were that, "your instrument was your admission to a weekend of yourself; bring what you need to be comfortable; and, leave your pets, we'll share ours." And we waited to see what would happen.

There was no email in those days, not even computers. We didn't publish an address and we had no phone. The further irony is that we put on the flyer that we could plan better if folks let us know they were coming. Oops. We chose mid-August since it was less likely to be raining on the Washington Coast. Turned out not to be true. Oh well. Nonetheless, a series of events had been put into motion.

For all practical purposes, we were penniless artisans and musicians living in the furthest corner of the continental U.S. as far away from the dulcimer's Appalachian Mountains birthplace as could be found and still, music found a way. Two events leading up to the festival that characterize for me the improbability of this first event have always been in my cherish-and-wonder box.

One morning, a week before the festival in this rainforest of hip-booted clam diggers and suspender wearing, wool-shirt loggers there was a knock on Janette's and my cabin door. A man stood there dressed in a white suit like an ante bellum Southern gentleman—black bow tie, white hair, wide-brimmed hat and all. He declined to come in but said, "I heard you are having a music festival and I wanted to give you this," and handed over a hundred-dollar bill. (That was a fortune; our rent in those days was 35 dollars a month.) Then he left and was never



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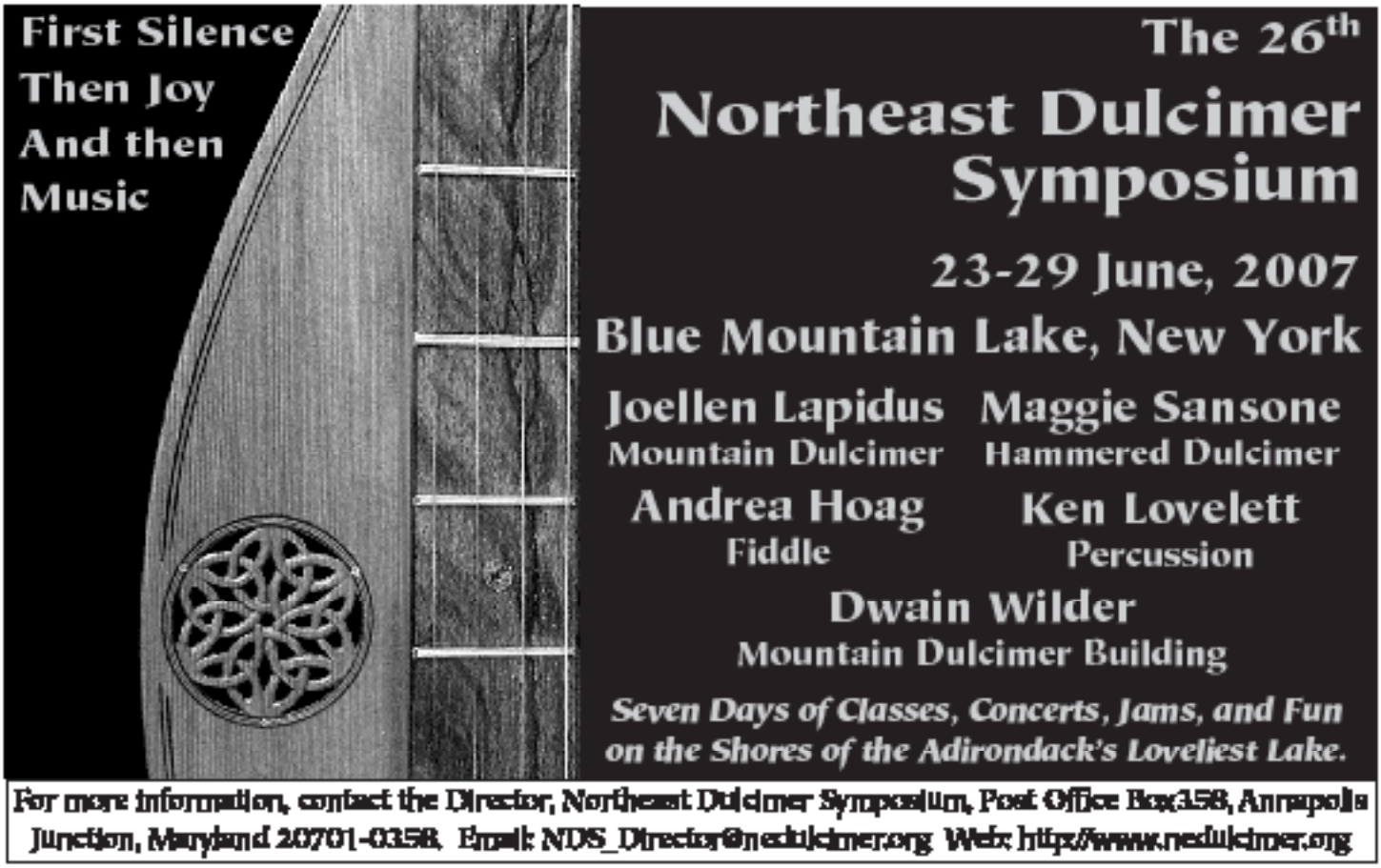
seen again. There's nothing like a little mystery to set the tone for beginnings.

Two days before the festival I was out in the bushes wondering where to dig a latrine. "Here's a likely place," I thought, sinking the shovel. Two strokes later I heard a clang and unearthed an old toilet. "Yep, must be the perfect spot," and I continued digging. About a half an hour later someone came tromping through the bushes. A man with the widest, most infectious grin I had ever seen cried out, "I can't believe it! I travel three-thousand miles on the dog and I find Bob Force digging a latrine!" I invited him to help me finish up and he did, beginning one of the many life-long friendships that were to come from KG.

Over the next couple of days about 75 folks trickled in from all corners of the United States and Western Canada. What we had in common was our desire to know more about dulcimer. And guess what? There was no agenda, yet people still found a way to share what they knew. We discovered one thing right away—everybody wanted to do everything together. There were no special interest areas; it was *all* interesting. One unique feature of the first KG that has persisted to this day is that since it occurred at an artist's guild, the non-musicians brought their skills to the group. One person sketched, another photographed, another just wove as the music wove around her. Today the KG still attracts people who come for the camaraderie and instead of playing music, weave, or photograph, or draw, or just read a book as the music plays around them.

There were no clocks, no timetables, no classes.

Three significant happenings during the festival helped to set KG's tone and character for all the years that were to come. Don Berry and Ian Griffin led us on a journey into the mathematics and philosophy of the Pythagoreans—understanding and experiencing the fundamental nature of the dulcimer, the diatonic, and the history of the divine monochordum. This was accomplished in part by using Don's dragon, a diatonic metallaphone with unison keytones tuned eight cycles per second apart. We learned that music itself has a pulse, a beat, and that pitch



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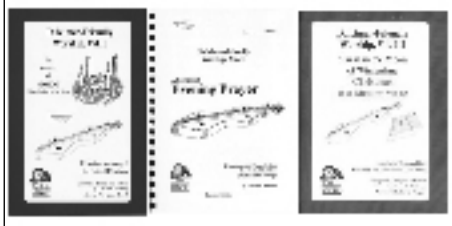

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is relative, not absolute. Oh, and that the brain *likes* the quint/octave drone and manufactures synaptic juices that essentially communicates pleasure, and "do it again" messages to the cerebral cortex. Mmmmm!

The second significant event was, imbued with a rudimentary understanding of the Pythagoreans, we next all proceeded to tune into each of the seven basic modes and spend an hour playing—or better yet—wandering through those scales. This took up an entire day. There were not as yet half-tone frets in the dulcimers present. Each mode wended its way through exploration and led to an inevitable close. I forget just which one took us to the limbo, but by that time we were ready to try anything, because everything was possible. We were all babes in these woods. To this day, anything musical is acceptable at a KG. The Gathering is still about moving back the borders of the unknown, discovering music in all of its forms.

The third event is both the most ordinary and the most extraordinary. We ate together. We pooled our resources and shared our provisions. Like the most primitive and enduring of societies, we broke bread together. This continues today.

These days, the *Kindred Gathering* is first and foremost the West Coast gathering of an extended family—a self-actualizing community. A few of us go every year, some every few years, some every decade or as chance allows. Early on we established some guiding principles.

We move the festival every year to a new place, preferably a state or two away. This accomplishes three things: we get to experience what music sounds like in the mountains, or by the seashore, or in the woods, or by a lake. Those who traveled far last year won't have to travel as far the next year. We've also discovered adventuring toward the unknown is a beguiling enchantress and works wonders for providing song material as well!

No matter how famous you think you are, you get three tunes in the Saturday night concert—medleys are discouraged, though tolerated. If you signed up, your name is drawn randomly from a hat. You may be on at 8 p.m. or at 1 a.m.—no guarantees. People often bring sleeping bags to the "show". Randomly during the concert people are encouraged to display their other talents. We call them unnatural acts, like being able to play two differently keyed flutes

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with your nose, or turn your tongue upside down and make it beat like a heart—stuff we learned as kids, usually, when we were unself-conscious about stupid stuff.

There are no pre-published workshops. A piece of paper is put up with three locations and a time grid and you fill it in with something you want to teach. This may or may not be musical, and may include, swimming, sailing, town trips or whatever that particular location offers in uniqueness. The corollary to this is there is only one official clock, but that everyone has the right to change it. If it is 3 o'clock and the workshop scheduled to end at three isn't over, then it must not be three yet.

We don't charge and no one gets paid. We post an expense sheet and put a donation jar next to it with usually some cute, kitschy sign or figurine to class it up. Sometimes the expenses run in the thousands, though we try to keep the weekend down to under a grand, exclusive of food costs. Only once was it not fully covered by donations. The repeat core group makes up the difference. It is, after all, a family gathering. Once, during the bi-centennial celebrations, the government offered to subsidize us. No takers.

We don't have a merchandising table. There's no real "general" public and the rest of us usually get what we need from individuals saying they have something new—a CD, a book, whatever, out in the car, or in the tent. We hold the festival on the weekend that falls the closest to the 15th of August—somewhere out in the West. Kids are always welcome. Pets are still discouraged. Sixty to ninety folks seem to be the yearly average attendance.

We are still governed by the principle: bring what you need to be comfortable. And, as we have grown older, we have found that what makes us comfortable is oftentimes by making other people comfortable, too. Most of us still camp in tents, but we try to have close by accommodations for those for whom that is too hard. We are a pretty eclectic bunch—musically, personally, and professionally.

In the forty years I have been captivated by the dulcimer the best word to describe my experiences surrounding it is: *community*. I've found that those who take up or associate with the instrument have more in common than not. Like Albert and I having gone to *Sweet's Mill*, many who have come to the *Kindred Gathering* have gone on to find, or to found, other dulcimer and music communities. Our greatest strength is not who we are

Congratulations to all the 2006 Winfield Winners!

Above are Jeff Hames. 1st place National Mountain Dulcimer and Heidi Cerrigione, 2nd place International Autoharp, as they accept their prize instruments.

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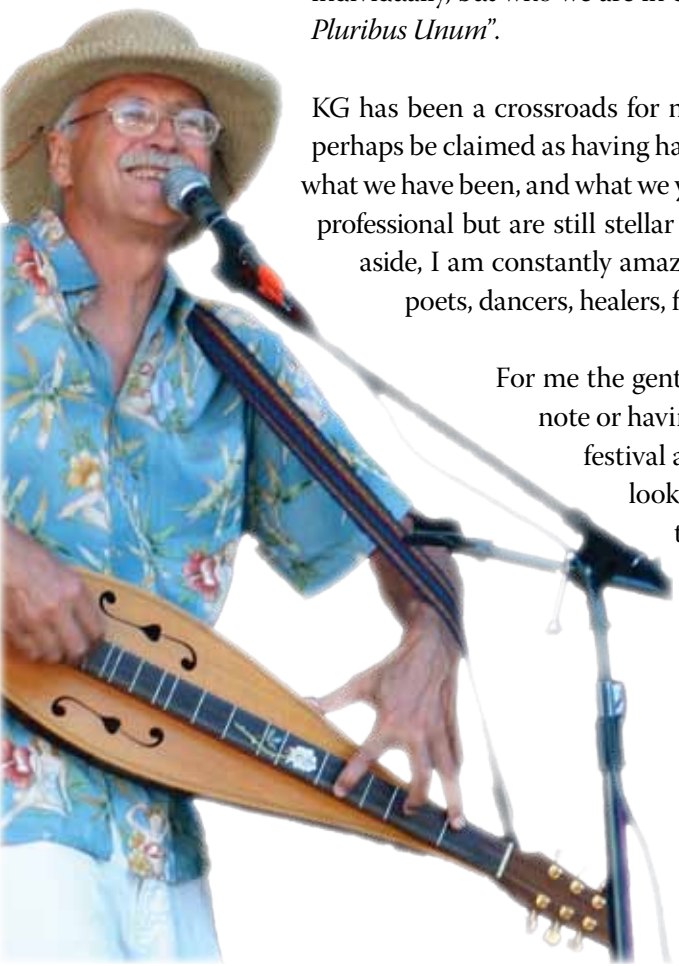
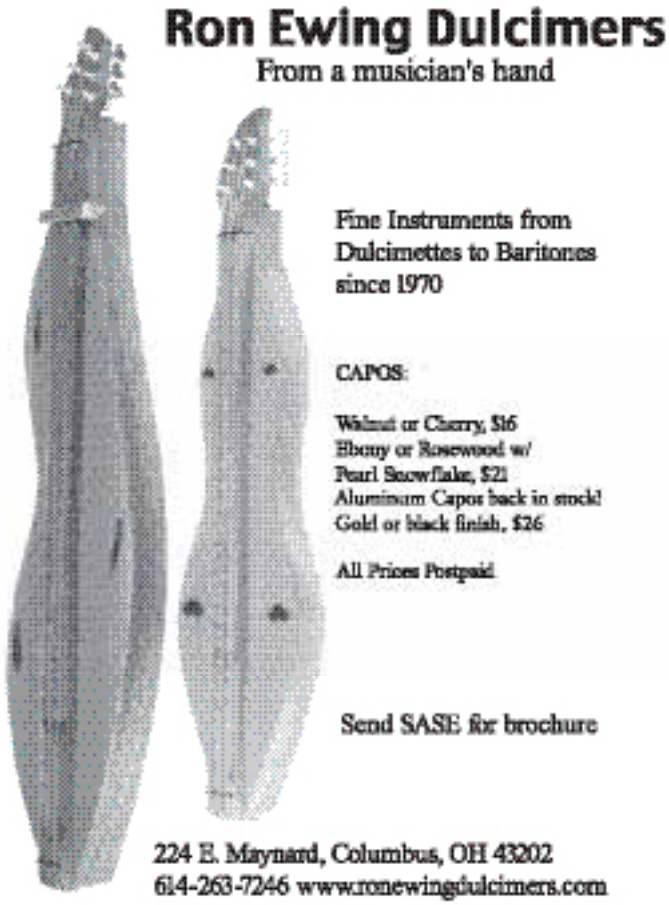
individually, but who we are in common. I guess we are none of us too far away from the American ideal, *"E Pluribus Unum"*.



KG has been a crossroads for many. Lots of records, CDs, books, performer launchings—all that—could perhaps be claimed as having had this festival as a touchstone, but to do so would be contrary to who we are, what we have been, and what we yet strive to be. Some folks who consistently show up have chosen not to turn professional but are still stellar musicians, accomplished singers, songwriters, and instrumentalists. Music aside, I am constantly amazed by all of the accolades that could be attributed to these people—farmers, poets, dancers, healers, fine artists, teachers, professors, engineers, doctors, nurses. The list goes on.

For me the gentle tenuousness of the creative act has always transcended playing the right note or having good timing and great technique. Years ago I found that when I went to a festival and chanced upon someone off by themselves playing their dulcimer, they'd look up, see me, and immediately launch into their very best something. I had to sneak around a tree if I wanted to hear those sublimely delicate moments when music is being born—when the Great Conversation is truly taking place. That's what KG is for me—permission from a group of friends to share a constantly creative space together. Community.

Robert Force has been a singer, songwriter, performer and builder of the mountain dulcimer for over thirty years. Along with Albert d'Ossche he wrote In Search of the Wild Dulcimer, one of the best selling dulcimer books ever. He has a video blog on folk music and dulcimer instruction on the web at www.robertforce.com He holds a Guinness World Record for organizing the largest harmonica band—1706 members! He lives in Port Townsend, Washington with his wife Jeanette.



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Dulcimer Players News Asks:

How does the dulcimer community influence the way you build?

The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.

Nick Blanton and Sam Rizzetta

Taking this little fragment from Archilochus, Isaiah Berlin wrote about people as foxes and hedgehogs. It applies to music, too. I'm a fox, and I work mostly for foxes. But once, most hammered dulcimers were played by hedgehogs. They had a short bass bridge, because nobody could imagine ever needing a B^{b}, or F. Why would they? It's hard to play Mississippi Sawyer in D or G, and use a B^{b}. But then foxes started to play hammered dulcimer. They would try stuff like Mozart, because they were interested in it, and the instruments had to change, get more comprehensive. They had to become better at traveling, because a concert became a journey. It could start with I. D. Stamper, but it would drop by Carolan, stop a while at JS Bach's, end up over in Bulgaria in 11/8 time. With all that variety to play, foxes ordered instruments the way people shop for Swiss Army knives. Though it has been challenging to keep working out the needs and changes for them, it has also kept things lively.

David Schnaufer, God bless him always, was a hedgehog. He had some ancient fretted dulcimers that had been knocked together out of sawed tulip poplar, with bent staples for frets, rusty screw eyes for tuners, a little paint for finish, and strings that hadn't been changed since the ink dried on the Gettysburg Address. But he'd bring music out of them that would make you cry. It'd be Barlow Knife, not Mozart, but that's not the point. Instead of being pretty good at playing a lot of things, those beat-up boxes played only a few things amazingly well. Of course, they also did that because David could pull it out of them. And David could pull it out of them because he lived in that music. When he played it, he was snug at home.

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Community of Builders

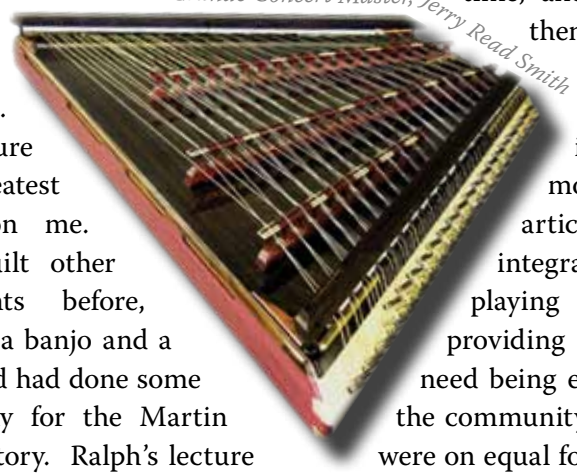
The Glyphon, by Ron Cook

Foxes, because they're traveling, don't go home much. One day they're at the Bach and Mozart motel, the next night in the O'Carolan and Wedding Music motel. Like a Swiss Army knife, the variety is useful, and I know some foxes who play very well indeed. But my roots are in the south, and the mountains, and sometimes when I play Old Timey music I feel like an Old Timey hedgehog, who should work for Old Timey hedgehogs. Stop playing everything from everywhere. Stop making dyed inlay, start using paint, and not many colors of paint either. Stop worrying about having enough Eb's available, new-fangled damper pedals, stop designing pickup systems. Stop changing a hammered dulcimer, and instead just take what's there and find out what it plays best. But then I can hear David crackle, "Nick old buddy, no way you'll ever do that", and I know he's right. I'm a fox. Just have to live with it.

Now, I wonder if the PCB layout for the buffer/preamp could be shrunk a little more....

Nick Blanton,
Shepherdstown, WV

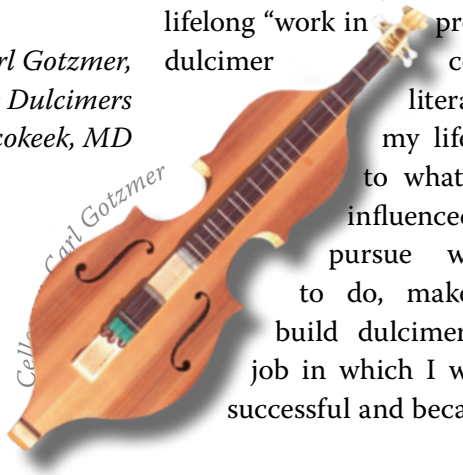
The dulcimer community has had a tremendous influence on our building. When I was at Lafayette College, Ralph Lee Smith gave a lecture there on the history of the mountain dulcimer. His lecture had the greatest impact on me. I had built other instruments before, including a banjo and a guitar, and had done some pearl inlay for the Martin guitar factory. Ralph's lecture really hooked me on the mountain dulcimer and I have been building them ever since (over 3000 in 35 years). We also make hammered dulcimers and have been heavily influenced by our friends Nick Blanton, Sam Rizetta, and Jody Marshall.



Grande Concert Master, Jerry Read Smith

Carl Gotzmer,
June Apple Dulcimers
Accokeek, MD

My building was influenced by the evolution of playing I have seen in the dulcimer community over the past 30 years. I have taught progressive playing techniques for that entire time, and have seen many of them put into application as the overall skill of the community increased, as well as moved toward more articulate styles and more integration into ensemble playing with the dulcimer providing a lead role. I saw a need being expressed by others in the community for instruments that were on equal footing in the ensemble in terms of tone and volume. Since that was always my direction as well, it was certainly a good fit. As a result I continue to ask "what if?" hoping that someday I'll feel like I've filled that need. I'm guessing it will be a lifelong "work in progress"! The dulcimer community literally changed my life. Response to what I was doing influenced me to pursue what I love to do, make music and build dulcimers. I quit a job in which I was financially successful and became a starving



Cello, Carl Gotzmer

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artist. I couldn't be happier about that, and I couldn't be more thankful to you all.

Gary Gallier
Springfield, MO

I began playing and building dulcimers as a hobby in 1977. Living near a small town in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, I had limited access to information and instruments. I also had an artistic need to break tradition, which led me to building some unique designs. The response to my instruments was so overwhelming I thought it might be possible to make a living at it. The dulcimer community was into Celtic music at the time. This is where I heard my first Irish Bouzouki. I was hooked! I began building bouzoukis, citterns, mandolins and guitars. All of the experience with these led to better dulcimers. My goal from the beginning was to strive for the highest possible quality. The learning curve has not slowed down yet. I am grateful for the gift of lutherie... What a great life doing what you love.

Bob & Allyson Gernandt,
Gernandt Stringed Instruments
Bryson City, NC

By knowing that there are men and women out there playing wonderful music on dulcimer and changing the world one person at a time encourages me to build a better dulcimer. I want my instruments to be seen in the hands of world shapers so I strive to build better instruments with each one I build. It gives me a great thrill when I hear of a player using an instrument that I've built to minister to people in hospitals, nursing facilities and churches. This inspires me to continue on as a dulcimer builder. What more could I possibly need?

Dan Daniels
New Traditions Dulcimers, Yreka, CA

I work in silence.

I go to a small number of dulcimer festivals, half a dozen or so each year, and lay out my wares for demonstration and sale. It is here that I encounter the dulcimer community. I listen to everyone playing their instruments, noting their methods, their musical choices, the details of how they use their hands. I drop around to my fellow and sister mountain dulcimer builders and look over what they have done, strike up conversations with them, and discuss new building techniques we have adopted.

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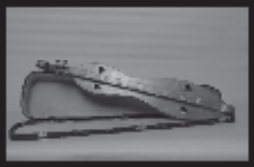

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And, most importantly, I observe closely everyone who comes into my booth. If they sit down and play one of my dulcimers, I listen carefully at the sound they elicit from it, how they use the instrument and their hands.

Here is where I am at the heart of the dulcimer community, where I am experiencing how my dulcimers are used by others. It is here that I get an intuitive feel for what is working, what needs further attention, what could be done that I hadn't thought of before. Very often all this is not even conscious. It will bubble up to consciousness as I drive home, sometimes. Other times it will arise while I'm doing something in the shop that so fully engages my rational mind that my unconscious can play without the usual strictures.

Dwain Wilder,
Bear Meadow Dulcimer Shop
Rochester, NY

From the beginning, we oriented our business toward a production approach, building standard models that stores could make available to their local players. After some years of this, people developed their own experiential knowledge base and started coming to us with their specific requests. For the most part, those requests were to tweak the basic tuning layout or hammer design, which contributed to our model evolution. We hope that we've had a positive impact on the hammered dulcimer community over the years with our commitment to building high quality instruments. It has certainly been a great community of people to be involved with.

Ray & Sue Mooers
Dusty Strings Company
Seattle, WA

The dulcimers we are producing now are highly sophisticated musical instruments compared to our early designs. They are the result of input from the dulcimer community over many years. We enjoy receiving special requests from customers because not only can we produce that special dulcimer just for them but we frequently learn something new ourselves!

David Marks
Folkcraft Instruments, Winsted, CT

If you are going to build dulcimers it is almost certainly because of some combination of three things. You love the instruments, you love the music, and you love the people that you meet. We try to encourage potential players on the dulcimer. We try to encourage new players to further develop their skills. We try to encourage better players to share their knowledge and their love for the music in general and dulcimers in particular. In short, we try to support the community of dulcimer players and potential players in as many ways as we can. It is our hope that the number of players and the overall skill level of those players will continue to increase. If something we do helps accomplish those goals then we will have succeeded.

Jim Woods
McSpadden Dulcimers and Evoharps,
Mountain View, AR

The dulcimer community has been a real blessing to me. I have been building hammered dulcimers full time for fifteen years. In that time I have met so many wonderful people who I wouldn't have met otherwise. I now have hundreds of folks nationwide that are my close friends. The existence of this wonderful network has totally influenced what I do.

Chris and Melanie Foss
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When I first sold my dulcimers more than 30 years ago, my market was here in Branson selling to tourists. I had to compete (or thought I did) with inexpensive instruments at very affordable prices. Later, when I started to travel to arts and crafts shows and especially dulcimer festivals I really focused on quality and tone. This was due to the influence of the dulcimer community that I came to know and love.

I strived to produce a dulcimer with more volume while keeping the traditional sound and shape of the instrument. I loved the dulcimer festivals where an all night jam was never out of the question. Also it was fun to sell a dulcimer where so many fine instruments were on display.

The dulcimer community is a really fine group of people. I am so very grateful for the opportunity to have known so many of them.

Joe Sanguinette
Elk River Dulcimers, Branson, MO

When I first decided to start selling my dulcimers, a portion of the dulcimer community was very enthusiastic about the quality and uniqueness of my instruments. This was quite encouraging and has led to my building dulcimers full time. I have adopted a few small design features to make my dulcimers comfortable to a broader range of players and playing styles such as extra slots in the nut/bridge allowing four equally spaced strings and double melody, and an optional shorter scale length.

Tom Yocky
Caldwell, TX

There are standard things that are needed throughout the community which I include on my dulcimers that I think the dulcimer community dictated long ago: the 6½ fret, larger sound, attractiveness in appearance, easy/light action, and the standard diatonic fret spacing. Today the community is interested in other things, like chromatic fret spacing and/or extra frets, amplification, convertible nuts and bridges, and individuality in visual design. I have evolved in that I offer to build dulcimers with internal pickups and extra frets, unlike what I had done fifteen years ago. Also, I do custom dulcimers where the customer can design their own sound holes, choose their own woods, or even request a left-handed instrument, which makes their dulcimer very personal to them and fulfills the need for individuality in ownership.

Kerry Coates
Gila Mountain Dulcimers, Capitan, NM

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continues on page 17

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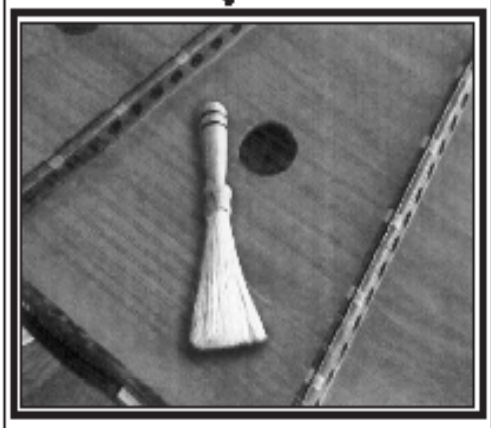

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As a performer, teacher and builder, I find that you need to introduce people to the dulcimer. The pleasing sound, the ease of playing, self satisfaction and gift of creating a happy atmosphere all play a part. There is no better reward than to see a smile on someone's face as they walk in and hear the music. Once this is achieved, you have the potential for a new candidate interested in learning to play the dulcimer. The candidate will search out magazines, like DPN, the web, clubs, teachers, builders and any information they can find. At this point in time, builders are obligated to build the best instrument for that person. The dulcimer has been a huge part of my life, and I'll do all I can to keep the instrument and the tunes alive for the coming generations.

Bill Robinson and Ken Harris
H & R Dulcimers, St. Charles, IL

One of the neat things about the dulcimer community is the diversity of playing and building styles, and types of music played on this wonderful instrument. It isn't all "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" anymore - not that there's anything wrong with that! So with that in mind, as a custom builder, I have to keep the needs and playing styles of my customers in mind when I set about to build an instrument for them.

Ron Ewing
Columbus, OH

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Maddie and Claire,

Thank you for all your work and caring, and for keeping us hammering and plucking in harmony for so many years.

Good luck Dan and Angie in your new adventure.

Stay in tune,

Steve Schneider

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After I started building dulcimers, performing and going to dulcimer festivals, I found that other players and builders would freely share tunes and information. Soon customers began asking for special features, and so I started building bass, soprano and custom instruments. I learned about dampers, special tuning schemes, locking joints, well-balanced hammers, dynamic range, tone and sustain, tuning stability, inlay, carving, santori and cymbali designs, stands, and many other things. I learned people would wait a year or more for an instrument that was handmade by a performer I was then able to put even more care into the construction and personalized decoration of each dulcimer.

Rick Fogel
Whamdiddle, Seattle, WA

When I first started building hammer dulcimers full time nearly 32 years ago here in North Carolina the dulcimer community was very small and extremely spread out. The grand majority of folks had no idea even what the instrument was! It is amazing how times have changed. There are now so many young and talented players driving the future of the hammer dulcimer.

For years I analyzed my designs based, mostly, on my own experience of playing in a wide variety of circumstances. Today there's a small army of folks playing from coast to coast in more situations than I could ever experience by myself. The feedback I get is invaluable. I have always encouraged those who play my instruments to "stay in touch" with me with any questions, concerns or problems. Ultimately it is my customers who have dictated the tone, weight and stability of my design. Interactions with my customers are absolutely crucial.

The delight of my dulcimer building career has been not only exploring the mysteries of musical instrument making but meeting the ever-expanding community of dulcimer lovers from all over.

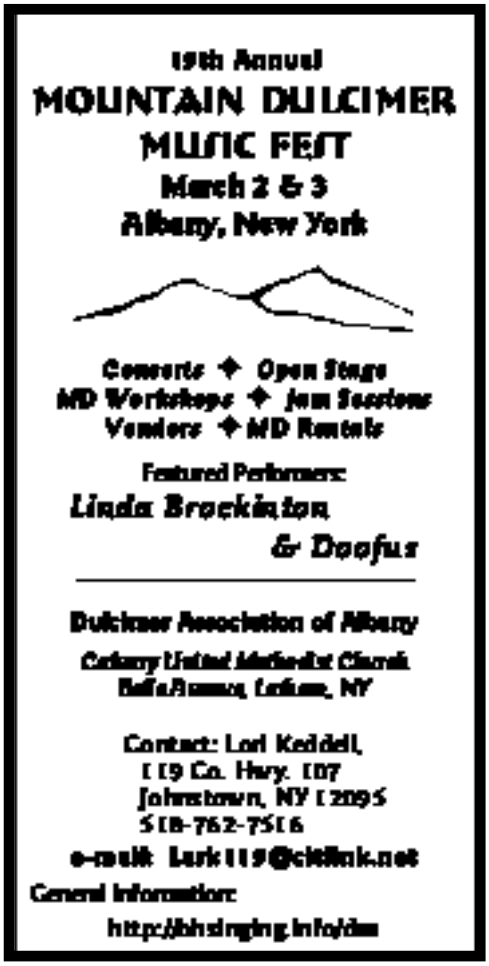
Jerry Read Smith,
Song of the Wood, Black Mountain, NC

Editor's note: Thanks to all the builders who responded to our emails and phone calls. We'll turn the tables in the next issue by asking players to give builders a little feedback.

Here's the question:

Putting all brand loyalties and financial considerations aside, how would you describe your dream instrument?

What would it look and sound like? Think big here, but stay within the realms of reality. Send your responses to: dpn@dpnews.com, with a subject line of dream instrument. - Dan



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by Sam Rizzetta

"I want to play a dulcimer!"

That wish, especially in earlier days, was often followed by the thought, "I'll have to build a dulcimer," or, "I want to build a dulcimer." The revival of dulcimers, both hammered and fretted, has been unusual in that it has been driven, in large part, by builders. If you wanted to play most other familiar instruments, say a saxophone or electric guitar, you just went to the nearest music store. At the beginning of the dulcimer revivals that was not possible. Even today few music stores carry dulcimers. And we need to support the ones that do if we want interest to grow.

There was a time when it was difficult to find old dulcimers for sale or track down the very few people building new ones. A few folks with instrument building or woodworking experience made some, played them, and spread the word. In fact, most of the players who first sparked the dulcimer revivals started by building their own. Soon, it became a folkway to make your own dulcimer.

This is an invitation to you to join the community of those who build dulcimers. And it is not difficult to get started. Today, information and materials are available to help you get started much more easily, and, of course, the best sources are the advertisers in the DPN.

For fretted dulcimers there are kits, instruction books, parts suppliers, videos, and classes. The easiest and least expensive way to start is to build a cardboard fretted dulcimer kit. These can actually sound quite decent and will give you some insight into the workings of the instrument. You will not need woodworking experience or a basement full of tools, just a table to work on. From there you can, if you choose, progress to more advanced designs and woodworking. For those with more time and tools, you may want to try an all wood kit or work from plans. I noticed that even a construction video is now available from Keith Young. Keith has taught many folks to build their own dulcimers at the Augusta Heritage Workshop, Elkins, WV. Also, the 2007 catalog for John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC lists a class for building a mountain dulcimer.

One of my favorite books, still available, is "The Mountain Dulcimer, How To Make It And Play It," by Howard W. Mitchell, Folk-Legacy Records, 1965. Howie Mitchell did a great service by writing a couple of small books on making mountain (fretted) dulcimers and hammered dulcimers and by playing dulcimers at concerts and festivals in the 1960's. This was one of the major sparks to light the revival fires. Howie's book is not a precise plan to build a dulcimer. It is more interesting than that. He guides us through his process of discovery and encourages our own learning and creativity. Along the way he introduces the basic geometry of fret placement, ideas on designs and construction, some basic music theory, playing and practice techniques, and common sense philosophy on instrument making. He also introduces his invention of the now common 6-1/2 fret, although he doesn't call it that. It is shown as fret #7.

Howie Mitchell's other dulcimer book, "The Hammered Dulcimer," is equally educational and entertaining. Again, it does not offer a recipe for building one successful dulcimer, but leads us through Howie's learning process and design experiments in building a number of dulcimers. I have a 1969 copy. Folk-Legacy Records released it as a book and record set in 1971. However, their website currently lists only the mountain dulcimer book. With luck you might find a used copy of the hammered dulcimer book to buy or borrow.

Kits, books, plans, and supplies for hammer dulcimer building are all available. Keep in mind that you can start with a simple project. A basic hammer dulcimer need not be complex to sound good and play a lot of music. Some of the first players I heard used dulcimers with only a treble bridge, including Chet Parker and Russell Fluharty. Their dulcimers may have been simple by current standards, but their playing was wonderful and influential.

FREE! Now do I have your attention? Yes, you can start hammer dulcimer building with free information. In 1972 the Smithsonian Institution published two little booklets I wrote on hammer dulcimer. Originally mailed out for free, they are still available at no cost on the Smithsonian

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Artist Profile - Connie Allen

by Judi Ganchrow

Able to leap tall instruments in a single bound! Look, up on the mast! It's a bird! It's a'playin'! It's Amazing Connie Allen, otherwise known in these parts as Connie Dulcimerseed. Many fanciful characters come to mind as one gets to know Connie, even Tinkerbell by her ability to change musical and life directions in a flash and with grace, always with her trusty dulcimer family at her side.

Unlike Superman, she does not apprehend the bad, but brings out the good in people who interact with her musically. She's always willing to give lessons to the hungry, and runs the "Flustered Fretters" dulcimer practice group biweekly at her home. Her ability to let each seed grow in its own way is readily apparent when you watch her in action there on Thursday nights—there couldn't be a more nurturing attitude. Some folks in the group just chord, others play only melody string, others chords and melody. Some folks read the music that initially she provided, but now many contribute to (thanks to TabEdit), while others play by ear. Some folks like it hot and fast, some folks like it slow and melodic. There is Connie just flowing with it, playing firmly, keeping everyone together, and when it's flowing on its own, she'll move off to improvise and accent the musical unit. Next thing you know someone else is following suit, trying to push their envelope a bit. There is no genre of music that is forbidden at this gathering and everyone is welcome. This club has been meeting now for 6 years.

Connie grew up in a house with the ubiquitous piano. Music was also provided by records, tapes, her singing mom, as well as by her dad, Johnnie Allen, who in midlife decided engineering was not enough and bought himself a bass. He became a frequent band member and her role model. Johnnie can still be heard playing in a swing band in the nearby senior citizen facility he calls home and Connie sometimes joins him for performances there. At eight years of age Connie was allowed to start taking piano lessons like her brother and found an immediate knack for memorizing the music. While she continued studying piano until she was seventeen and tried violin in school, it was the dulcimer and guitar that began to speak to her, especially through recordings she heard of Richard Fariña. She thought the dulcimer was the most advantageous for she might quickly become the best player in New Hampshire with not much competition.

At age fourteen she set about building her first four-string dulcimer (from a kit) and the glue had hardly dried when she took it to her first performance with Mary Hostage. The next year she set out to build one of two more dulcimers she constructed, this time from scratch with the help of Howie Mitchell's book. While she got the hang of setting the frets, she discovered her fingers were in jeopardy of the power tools and decided her place in music was probably going to be in performance and composition, not in building. The first songs she wrote during high school caught the spirit of the times with often politically strident lyrics.

After years of donning a business suit as a computer programmer and business analyst, she rediscovered contradancing and attended the 1994 Summer Solstice where a three-string McSpadden dulcimer fell in her lap. She began to explore the voices, string and fret variations, and tonal ranges of different dulcimer designers, gradually acquiring her dulcimer menagerie.

In 1995 she began playing for contradances on a regular basis with the Continental Drifters string band, contributing her musical energy on both bass and dulcimer. Two CDs and a music book entitled *The More the Merrier* evolved and from this musical bond that spanned a ten-year period. This CD pair showcased the band playing original old timey tunes written by bandleader and seasoned fiddler, Ed Cormier.

Wooden buildings marking the beginning of San Diego are preserved in a park near downtown. Starting in 2004 and continuing for about two years, Connie donned elegant hats and garb from the turn of the century to play dulcimer and sing about the history of San Diego: An actual six-hour/day solo music gig! In this context she became more and more

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immersed in San Diego's origins, and began to make up more and more songs telling stories of past historical events. Her special collection of songs for Old Town has been compiled onto a CD, *Home in San Diego*, produced by Andy Robinson for Brontosaurus Records and just released in December.

During her daily stage performances, hundreds if not thousands of people were introduced to her dulcimers, her singing, her showmanship and her special brand of music. She often found willing accompanists among the audience and provided washboards, turkey basters and other "early" instruments to this end.

Surrounding this demanding musical period in her life were six years of music conversations with fellow musician Bill Dempsey that also resulted in a wonderful CD entitled *The Waves We Left Behind*. You were always guaranteed a good dose of fun music, good harmonies, and musically interactive creativity whenever the two of them shared a stage.

Seaside attractions are a vital ingredient in the California landscape and Connie "jumped ship" in reverse: Now she alternates hats being cook or captain, playing music and everything in between to "captives" on the Star of India, an historic tall ship (built in 1863) moored in San Diego harbor. So while in the past her dulcimer forte may have been swing, old timey, classical, Latin, or folk, especially train songs, now the musical focus has turned to the sea. Actually, the sea has held her fascination for a long time and she put out a tab book arranged for Appalachian dulcimer entitled "Songs of the Sea", including some pieces she wrote herself as well as traditional hornpipes, broadside ballads, and contemporary sea songs. Being a part of the Maritime Museum that has working ships like the Californian, she is also learning the ropes to be an actual crewman—perhaps in case that wily Captain Hook should reappear. The currents of the sea are powerful and one can scarcely guess where these waves will carry her. Whatever it is she will no doubt continue to use her music and newly found sailing skills to promote multicultural understanding, especially applied to the environment in ways that can benefit humanity.

Connie Allen
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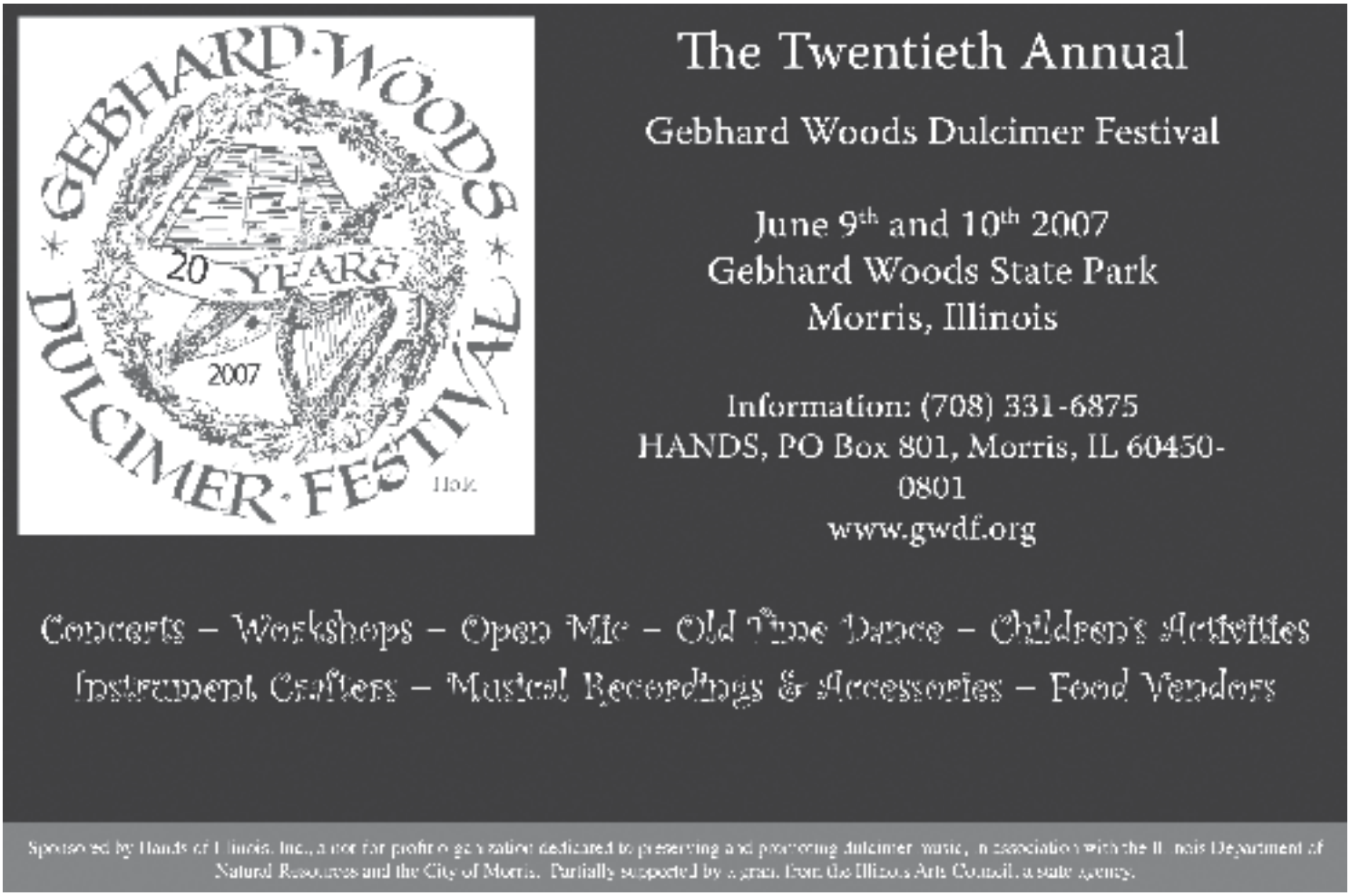
San Diego, CA 92123-3048
connie_allen@dulcimerlover.org

Judi Ganchrow runs the Israel Dulcimer Society and gives dulcimer workshops at gatherings in Israel and in the U.S.
judimer@gmail.com



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by Connie Allen

The Lighthouse

Tuning D-A-d

I on-ly knew The Light house in the mor-ning from a sea like a grey tab-by cat.
Yes the wind howled _____ with scor-ning tes-ting the ord-i-na-ry.

Pale on pal-er sky; hard-ly caught my eye just a beam the gulls would screech at. Then the
Clouds and land seemed one all head way was hard won toward the lu-min-ar-y. Then I

glass fell with out a war-ning shat-terred the ear-ly light and I
knew a rock well worth a-dor-ning with can-dles night and day.

quick ly came to heed the reck less racing steeds all the hor-ses la thered and white.
Pale on pal-er sky hand a bove my eye sa-lutes The Lighthouse each way.

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Technical Dulcimer–continued from page 19

website. I suppose this represents a government subsidy for dulcimer players. Who would have thought? Go to: www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/hdmake.htm. On that page you will find some historical information on hammered dulcimers plus links to the booklets "Hammer Dulcimer History and Playing," "Making a Hammer Dulcimer," and "A Selected Bibliography of Hammered and Plucked Dulcimers and Related Instruments." To build a hammer dulcimer you will need both hammer dulcimer booklets; the one on history and playing includes the tuning chart required. You can print them right from the website.

The Smithsonian plans are for a basic instrument with 12 treble courses, 11 bass courses, and four strings per course. The design is dated but serviceable, and a great many dulcimers have been made from these booklets. A partial pin block template for locating where to drill the holes for tuning pins and hitch pins was included in the original booklet, but it was omitted from the online version. Around 1972, I introduced the idea of using two strings per course instead of four to reduce the tuning task and to reduce tension on the frame. You can choose to make yours either way.

Some builders attempt a tour de force dulcimer with fancy "improvements" on their first try. But, no matter what woodworking, design, and engineering skills you may possess, much of the tone, playability, and musicality come from subtle things that are learned over time. Guess how I know this! For your first dulcimer I suggest a simple design or a kit. Simple is often best with dulcimers. If you get hooked on building, your instruments will just keep getting better and better. If you have no woodworking experience, that need not be a deterrent. We all start with no experience. An open mind and a willing attitude are far more important.

Give it a try. When more people build dulcimers, more people enjoy dulcimers. And that is good for all of us.

Resources:

Book and video, "How to Make a Mountain Dulcimer," by Keith Young. www.AppalachianDulcimers.com

Folkcraft Instruments. Books, plans, and supplies for making mountain and hammer dulcimers. www.folkcraft.com

Folk-Legacy. "The Mountain Dulcimer, How To Make It And Play It," by Howard W. Mitchell. www.folk-legacy.com

Guild of American Luthiers. Hammer dulcimer plans. www.luth.org

John C. Campbell Folk School. Class for building a mountain dulcimer. www.folkschool.org

"Making A Hammer Dulcimer," and, "Hammer Dulcimer History and Playing," by Sam Rizzetta. http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/hdmake.htm

Musicmaker's Kits, Inc. Kits for hammer dulcimers, mountain dulcimers, and cardboard mountain dulcimers. www.musikit.com

Stewart-MacDonald. Instrument making and repair tools and supplies, including mountain dulcimer kits and hardware. www.stew-mac.com

Wire, tuning pins, and tuning wrenches for hammer dulcimer. www.fortepiano.com

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Quick Picks

By Neal Walters

Glory, Glory and Mamie's Dream
Corydon Dulcimer Society

The Corydon Dulcimer Society has two relatively recent releases that I have not previously covered. Both of these CDs feature over thirty of the society's membership playing and singing on mountain and hammered dulcimers, bass, guitar, fiddle, mandolin, autoharp, cello, banjo, harmonica, and dulcibro. The music is all traditional on *Mamie's Dream* while *Glory, Glory* features all Gospel material. The sound is like what you'd hear at a very well organized dulcimer jam where the playing and singing is very strong and confident. You can definitely feel the pride and enjoyment that playing in such a group brings. There's much to admire and much to emulate and I'm sure they wouldn't mind you playing along in your living room!

Corydon Dulcimer Society
PO Box 638
Corydon, IN 47112

Denim & Lace and Destination Toyland
Barbara Hale Ernst

Barbara "hales" from Shiloh, Illinois (I couldn't resist) and is a fine dulcimer player who won the Mountain View regional contest back in 1990. These two CD releases aren't terribly new, but they just landed in my inbox and I'm duty bound to report them to you. Not that it's much of a chore, as these are really nice recordings just chock full of wonderful songs arranged and played beautifully by Barbara. *Denim & Lace* is a CD compilation of two of her original releases, *Dust Off My Dreams and Believe* and *Love, Love, Love*, while *Destination Toyland* is a set of 17 Christmas favorites, which are always in season. There is a lot of music on these two volumes, and if you're already familiar with Barbara's playing, this would be a great set to add to your collection.

Dulcimer Crossroads Music
214 Siebert Road
Shiloh, IL 62269
618-624-8100

It's About Time
John Sackenheim

The theme of John's first CD is great American music through time. It is mostly solo mountain dulcimer, with dulcimer harmonies and backup provided occasionally by Tull Glazener, Lee Rowe, Steve Siefert, and Janice Walrath. That's pretty tall cotton, but John stands very tall, even in that crowd. Additionally, though, John is mining some very familiar territory in terms of the popularity of this material. He appears to have struck real gold, in that these are not tunes one would normally associate with the mountain dulcimer. He does a terrific job on all of them, and I'm guessing you'll be writing him for TAB as soon as you hear them!

PO Box 220
Okeana, OH 45053

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Homestead
Mike and Connie Clemmer

Mike and Connie Clemmer run Wood-N-Strings Dulcimer Shop in Townsend, TN and, as far as I know, this is their first CD release. Mike plays and builds mountain dulcimers, and Connie plays bowed psaltery. There are also a few cuts featuring Mike's banjo dulcimer which he calls a Ban-Jammer. The program is almost entirely traditional tunes with three or four originals by Mike and/or Connie. This includes the title cut which Connie wrote. The arrangements are straightforward and Mike's playing style is very effective. The addition of the psaltery provides some variety. This is a very listenable recording.

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PO Box 383, Townsend, TN 37882
865-448-6647
www.clemmerdulcimer.com

Lesson 7
Stephen Siefert

Lesson 7 in Steve's monthly video series continues Steve's exploration of chords, which began in Lesson 6. This particular lesson features several versions—from a beginner quarter note version to a version for advanced players—of *Sandy River Belle,* which covers hammer-ons and pull-offs, a discussion of open 5ths or "shortcut" chords, and a sampling of some basic chord progressions in various musical genres, including blues country/pop and old time jazz. Example tunes include *Mississippi Sawyer, Bile Them Cabbage Down, Soldier's Joy, Whiskey Before Breakfast, Angelina Baker, Old Joe Clark* and *Southwind*. As in Lesson 6, the accompanying booklet contains some excellent charts that lay everything out in simple pictures, and the DVD provides audio examples for practicing.

[Editor's note: At the time of printing, lessons 8 and 9 in Stephen's series were available as well.]

1260 Old Charlotte Pike
Pegram, TN 37143
615-353-8230
www.stephenseifert.com

All Aboard!
Erich Overhultz

Erich was last heard from back in the Fall, 2005 issue when he released his first CD, a holiday recording on which I indicated he "played everything but the kitchen sink." His primary instrument is still piano, but you will hear hammered dulcimer, washboard, drums and cymbals, shakers, xylophone, finger cymbals, rainstick, kazoo, sleigh bells, slide whistle, newspaper, pots and pans, alarm clock, and some thing called a "flatulaphone", which I'm afraid to know any more about and don't think I want showing up anywhere near my kitchen sink. He's joined by Ed Franz on drums, block, and cowbell and by Donny Hicks on steel guitar and fiddle. Erich's sensational piano playing is front and center, for the most part, but there are several cuts featuring hammered dulcimer including; *Flowers of Antrim, Lil' Crawdad*, and *Drowsy Maggie*. He's obviously having a good time and it's fun to listen to the effects he produces with the stuff that wouldn't fit into Fibber McGee's closet. I should warn you that this CD is very much a homemade project. You should not expect fancy packaging or clever graphics with your "flatulaphone" but you will hear some good music.

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eoverhultz@aol.com
www.erichoverhultz.com

Cracklin' Choir
Doug Thomson

Doug has been playing the mountain dulcimer for nearly thirty years and has directed the Claremont Spring Folk Festival most of that time. He created the combination banjo-dulcimer he calls the banjo-mer, played by a host of nationally known musicians including the late David Schnaufer, Lois Hornbostel and Heidi Cerrigione. His first release showcased the banjo-mer. His latest CD focuses on traditional and original songs and

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Spring Will Come
Karen Ashbrook

It's been a while since we had a new release focusing on Karen's always delightful hammer dulcimer playing. As part of the bands Ceoltoiri and King David's Harp, and in a duo setting with her husband, multi-instrumentalist Paul Oorts, Karen has been making plenty of music over the years, but it's a real treat to see her name out front on the masthead again. *Spring Will Come* is a live album taken from a reunion concert celebrating her 30 years of dulcimer playing and features an eclectic mix of Belgian, Celtic, French, and Jewish music played with great skill and obvious passion by an all-star aggregation. Paul adds harp guitar, musette accordion, cittern and vocals. Steve Bloom adds percussion and David Scheim plays piano and Celtic harp on several tracks. Ceoltoiri mates Sue Richards on Celtic harp and Connie

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MUSIC REVIEWS

The Very Top of the Tree
Bonnie Carol

Bonnie wants to climb them to the very top, whether it's the Chinaberry tree from her Texas childhood or the aspens that surround her Colorado home. It's unclear to me what that has to do with her new recording, exactly, other than it's obvious that she wasn't "out of her tree" when she recorded it! Joking aside, *The Very Top of the Tree* is a wonderful album of hammered dulcimer music from a variety of sources. She calls on some good friends for help: Randy Kelley on guitar, classical guitar, mandolin and accordion; Randy Sauer on piano and accordion; Eric Levine on fiddle; Tom Wasinger on Chamberlin cello, bass, baritone electric guitar and lap steel; and Pamela Robinson on saxophone, and they deliver in spectacular fashion. The material is both traditional and modern but every piece is timeless in its own way and played

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Bill Taylor - Dulcimer
Bill Taylor

Most of you will recognize Bill Taylor's name and exceptionally pretty face from literally scores of festival and workshop appearances, and as one of our finest mountain dulcimer luthiers. But I don't think many of you will be thinking, "I just love his last recording", because he doesn't have a last recording! That will all change now as his new CD, *Bill Taylor – Dulcimer*, hits the market. Bill is a remarkable musician on several instruments but we all want to hear him play the dulcimer and that's what he does on old favorites like; *Tennessee Waltz, Georgia on My Mind, Vincent, And So It Goes* and *Hard Times.* He delivers a fistful of original songs as well including: *A New Direction*, written as a wedding present; *Uncle Bob*, a tribute to dulcimer-maker Bob Mize; *Florida Girl*, written for his wife Barbara; *Copper Hill*, about the area where his dad was raised; and *Emma's Song,* written for his daughter. Contemporary songs like Dave Matthews', *#41,* and Darrell Scott's, *You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive,* round everything out. Bill plays mountain dulcimer, baritone dulcimer, guitar, his homemade bouzouki, banjo, mandolin, bass, and, of course, he sings. But, the dulcimer is front and center on every selection. That is as it should be, because Bill is a great player who combines technical mastery of the fret board with equal measures of artistic sensitivity and a sincere appreciation for the song. This may be Bill's first recording, but I certainly hope it won't be his last. Other tunes include: *Over the Waterfall, Whiskey Before Waltzing, Summertime*, and the *Wizard of Oz Medley.*

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My Sabbath Home
Dave Para & Cathy Barton

Festival favorites, Dave Para and Cathy Barton, have a brand new all-gospel album that is a real treat. *My Sabbath Home* is filled with songs you will want to learn. Cathy plays autoharp, banjo, guitar and sings, in addition to her great job on hammered and mountain dulcimers, while Dave plays guitar and 12-string guitar, and also sings. Several guest musicians, include: David Wilson on fiddle, cello and mandolin; Keven Hennessy on bass; Pete Szkolka on keyboards; and Knox McCrory on harmonica. Tempe McGlaughlin and Bob and Melissa Atchison help out on vocals, as does the First Christian Church Chancel Choir. Dave and Cathy, in addition to being superb musicians, have a knack for choosing good songs. *Sabbath Home*, which was one of the songs cited by Laura Ingalls Wilder in her books, *I Used to Have a Father and Mother* from Washington Phillips, and *A Light at the River*, a wonderful song collected by Alice Gerrard and making the festival rounds, with no small measure of thanks to Margaret Wright, are already at the top of my learn list.

As we've come to expect from Dave and Cathy, all the songs are extremely well played and exceptionally well sung. Though neither dulcimer is featured as much as many of us would like, Cathy's playing is rock solid on both mountain dulcimer and hammered dulcimer and I have no hesitation in recommending it highly to anyone who likes good singing and good songs. Other tunes include: *Deep Settled Peace, You'll Be Rewarded Over There, Poppa Was a Preacher, Amazing Grace (to the tune of Benton's Dream!), The Unclouded Day, Ain't No Grave, I Sing the Mighty Power of God, Africa, The Peace Carol, Ship Ahoy!* and more.

Softly and Tenderly and The Moon Shines Bright
Wendy Barlow and Bob Bellamy

We have a wealth of hammered dulcimer material this issue and two recent releases from Bob Bellamy and Wendy Barlow are right up there with the others I've mentioned. Softly and Tenderly consists of instrumental arrangements of traditional hymns performed with great skill and attention to detail. This is peaceful and meditative music with enormous potential to comfort and soothe. The hammered dulcimer and harp are perfectly suited to the task, and Bob and Wendy wring every last drop of nuance from the music. I think if I were faced with open heart surgery and they asked me what music I'd like to hear during the operation, I'd vote for this. It's really that relaxing. Another thing that should appeal to you is that, apart from *Amazing Grace, Sweet Hour of Prayer,*

continued on page 30

by Neal Walters

Tails & Tunes Along Rugby Creek
Vicki Stuckert and Friends

Vicki Stuckert is a mountain dulcimer player from Ohio. Vicki Stuckert also loves horses. She got involved with Rugby (VA) Horse Rescue during a visit to Grayson Highlands Park when she and her husband were picking up their daughter from a hike along the Appalachian Trail. They spent the night at the horse rescue cabin after being caught out as dark descended and, the next day, found out about the farm and its operations and financial difficulties. They visited again later and, somewhere along the way, she got the idea to publish a CD and accompanying songbook with the proceeds to benefit the rescue operation (which, by the way, takes in kittens, dogs, llamas, goats, sheep, chickens, roosters, mules, miniature horses and donkeys in addition to full grown horses). There's a lot more about the farm in

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Tree - Bonnie Carol
from page 28

beautifully by all the musicians. She starts with *The Distance Suite* which combines Peter Jung's *Far Away* with her own compositions *Close at Hand* and *Dead Center*, and branches into Tex-Mex, with *Dicha Eterna*, and Scotch meancholy with *Farewell to Craigie Dhu.* Additional titles include; *Tango to the Finnish*, *Neil Gow's Lament*, *This Stone's Story*, *Inis Oírr, Friday the Thirteenth, Miss Rowan Davies, La Cumparsita,* and *Bird Ballet.* I know I say this a lot, but you should buy this!

Spring Will Come *– Karen Ashbrook, 820 Dennis Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20901, 301-592-0101, mail@karenashbrook.com, www.karenashbrook.com*

The Very Top of the Tree *– Bonnie Carol, 15 Sherwood Road, Nederland, CO 80466, 303-258-7763, bonnie@bonniecarol.com, www.bonniecarol.com*

Softly and Tenderly and The Moon Shines Bright *– Wendy Barlow and Bob Bellamy, 1156 Wyandot Road, Bucyrus, OH 44820, 419-562-0784*

Tails & Tunes Along Rugby Creek *– Vicki Stuckert and Friends, mt_dulcigal@yahoo.com (Book/CD)*

Bill Taylor - Dulcimer *– Bill Taylor, 790 McMahan Hollow Rd., Pigeon Forge, TN 37863, bt1478963@aol.com, www.billtaylordulcimers.com*

Sabbath Home *– Dave Para & Cathy Barton, PO Box 33, Boonville, MO 65233, 660-882-7821, www.bartonpara.com*

Rugby Creek - Vicki Stuckert and friends
from page 29

the songbook, but suffice it to say, it's a very worthy cause. The thing to keep in mind is that the CD and the songbook are also very worthy of your attention. Vicki surrounded herself with some of the finest musicians in Grayson County (and that's the same thing as saying in the country) and *Tails & Tunes Along Rugby Creek* is a wonderful CD of old time music. Vicki plays dulcimer, of course, but she gets lots of quality help. Don Pedi plays dulcimer; Thornton, Emily and Martha Spencer play fiddle, banjo and mandolin; Joe Riggs plays autoharp; Wayne Henderson plays guitar; Dr. Joe Smiddy plays guitar; Papa Joe Smiddy plays banjo; Deb Bramer plays bass; daughter Carrie plays fiddle; and Willard Gayheart plays guitar and contributes the wonderful pencil drawing on the cover of the book. The tunes are presented simply, but very effectively, with Vicki's dulcimer anchoring things on most selections. Several of the musicians sing, so you'll hear a variety of lead vocals. There are 14 cuts on the CD, and the book has the music and dulcimer TAB for those and for another 10 songs. The titles include; *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny, The Appaloosa Trail, The Ballad of Caty Sage, Clinch Mountain Backstep, Deep Settled Peace*, and several more. This is real down home music played with conviction and heart, and it's for a worthy cause. What are you waiting for?

Softly, Moon - Barlow and Bellamy
from page 29

and a couple of others at most, you won't already have many of them in your collection! This includes *Immortal, Invisible, My Hope Is Built, O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing, We Gather Together, Once to Every Man and Nation, The King of Love My Shephard Is, Lead on O King Eternal* and several more. *The Moon Shines Bright* takes the same calming approach to traditional Christmas carols, though the tunes themselves may be much more familiar. Patricia Featherstone adds violin and viola, otherwise, it's again just harp and hammered dulcimer (though I could swear I heard an un-credited guitar in there on *Hark, the Herald Angels*). This is just the thing to put on when you're curled up before the fire and waiting for Santa to arrive. You'll understand why nothing is stirring, not even a mouse.

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Spring - Karen Ashbrook
from page 28

McKenna on vocals and guitar make their presence felt, as well. Karen, who also plays wooden flute and pennywhistle, is hands-down one of the finest dulcimer players around, so dulcimer "fireworks" abound. Her playing is superbly woven into the fabric of her "band of the moment", which changes with every song in this concert. Paul's talents are manifest as well, but I don't remember hearing him play accordion before, despite the fact that I knew he was a big fan of musette music. I didn't know just how well he can sing either, but both talents are exquisitely revealed on *Accordeon*, a song about the relationship between a street musician and his accordion. The title of the album comes from a set of contemporary lyrics set to the tune of *Carolan's Cup*, part of a medley with *Taimse I m'Chodladh* (I Am Asleep). Sue Richards' harp kicks off the slow air most appropriately, and Connie McKenna's vocal is superb. Karen's flute playing is front and center on the medley of *Jimmy Ward's/Old Joe's Jig*. Her dulcimer playing throughout ranges from delicate to driving, with several stops in between. Other tunes include; *The Belle and the Butler, De Winter is Vergangen/La Bien Aimeé, My Lowlands Away, Orcha Bamidhar/Prailach #7, Iberian Jig Set, Boys of Bedlam, Durme, Parting Glass*, and *Candles in the Dark Suite*. 'Spring will come and ice will thaw,' but you're unlikely to find a nicer dulcimer recording this winter!

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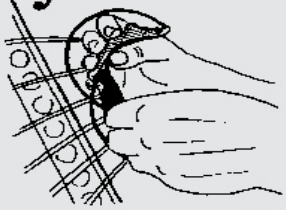

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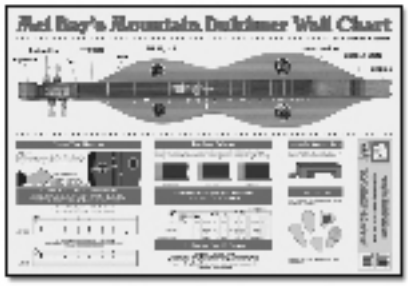

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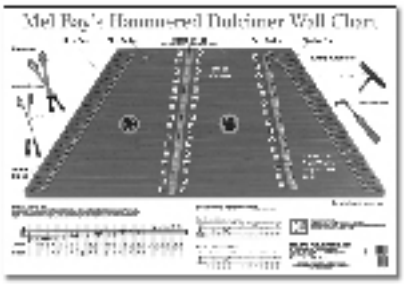

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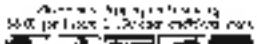

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tunes in the Christmas spirit played on dulcimer, banjo and banjo-mer. *Cracklin' Choir* refers to the sound of the wood crackling in the fireplace on one of those cold and wintry Southern California days. Hey, if you haven't been there, don't doubt it—it can get plenty cold.

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Around the World

by Paul Beck & Christie Burns

Dulcimer World Congress

It was October 2005, and I was on stage in Beijing, whistling the melody and playing the bass riff from "Big Noise from Winnetka" on a cimbalom while Colleen Meehan drummed along on her bodhrán. That's American music on a Hungarian hammered dulcimer with an Australian playing an Irish drum in China.

International, you say? Not by half. The final piece of the evening featured a massed hammered dulcimer band with musicians from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Iran, the U.S., Canada, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Greece, and Hungary. All on the same stage, all playing the same piece. All even reaching the last note at the same time, more or less.

The occasion was the Eighth Yang Qin World Congress, known in other years as the Cimbalom World Congress, the Hackbrett World Congress, and, if we're lucky, perhaps one day as the Hammered Dulcimer World Congress. The biannual gathering is the official meeting of the Cimbalom World Association, a Budapest, Hungary-based organization for promoting the music and instruments of the hammered dulcimer family. CWA members include professional and amateur musicians, instrument makers, musicologists, students, and many interested others.

The congress takes place every two years, in a different country each time. In addition to the CWA members' meeting, there are four days of presentations by the delegations from every country at the congress. There are musical performances, lectures, and instrument displays. There are also plenty of chances to meet, talk, eat, drink, and play music with people from all over the world. The congress wraps up every year with sightseeing and an international gala concert. In 2007 the meeting once again becomes the Hackbrett World Congress as it moves up into the Bavarian Alps to Oberammergau, Germany. The congress runs October 3–7, 2007. Non-CWA-members are welcome to attend, though the cost is slightly higher than for members. You can find more information on the Cimbalom World Association's Web site at www.cimbalom.org. *- Paul Beck*

Editor's Note: The first time I attended the CWA congress, I was pleasantly surprised at how little it cost. The organizers work hard to get corporate and government support in order to make the event as affordable as possible for attendees. This year, the fee for members is €125 (approximately $160 at the time of this printing), and that includes four nights in a youth hostel and all of your meals. The cost for non-members is €150, but it's worth it to join, as membership in the CWA is only $20. Those wishing for fancier accommodations can reserve a hotel room during the congress for an additional €15 per night. For an unforgettable week in Germany with friends from all over the world, it's a real bargain! I'm always happy to talk with anyone who's considering attending. Email me at christie@dpnews.com if you have any questions.

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Veronika Adamicova is a 26-year-old musician whose compositions and ultra-expressive style of cimbalom playing could bring you to tears. Or at least that's what happened to me. I became fast friends with this smart and stylish Slovakian at the 2003 Cimbalom World Congress in Switzerland. She was fun and easy to talk to, and in the intervening years, we've kept up correspondence together over email. Every time I listen to my recording of the Slovakian performance at the congress, one particular piece stands out and reminds me of the emotion that swept over me the first time I heard it. I was later surprised to learn this piece, which Veronika calls "Rondo for Cimbalom", was actually a homework assignment.

As a student at the music conservatory in Bratislava, Slovakia, she was required to compose a piece in rondo form, and this was the result. "I wanted to compose some solo piece for cimbalom, because there was (is) not many things to play, excepting folklore and the transcriptions. Although it's possible to study cimbalom at the conservatory, there doesn't exist as much of original literature for this instrument as for the others. I wanted to play something original."

To her grandfather's delight, Veronika began playing the cimbalom when she was six. He loved the sound of the cimbalom in connection with Slovakia's folkloric heritage, but Veronika has followed the instrument down a path that has led her to the works of Beethoven, Bach, 19th century Russian composers like Rimsky-Korsakov, and music of the impressionistic period, the influence of which is apparent in her "Rondo for Cimbalom".

In a more contemporary vein, Veronika likes to listen to the music of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Weather Report, the Alan Parsons Project, and Queen. She's currently studying electronic music composition in Paris, where she can sometimes be found playing her cimbalom in a small restaurant. She says, "Cimbalom is not very well-known in France. Most people look at me and ask: What am I playing on? But in general, they like it." Of her musical aspirations, Veronika says, "I would like to continue to compose for cimbalom, I would like to establish a group and play my music. I am very interested in the possibility of playing an electric cimbalom. I´ve never heard it, but I know it exists and it has to be great. I would like to hear the sound of cimbalom, which is known as a traditional folk instrument, in combination with the electric instruments."

Although Veronika does not yet have an official CD to her credit, she's staying active on the music scene, and will make the trip to Germany for the 2007 Cimbalom World Congress. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments about Veronika's music, she encourages you to email her at the following address: weyaamice@gmail.com.

My recording of "Rondo for Cimbalom" performed at the 2003 Cimbalom World Congress is my editor's cut on the sampler CD included with this issue of DPN.
- Christie Burns

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The Art of Performing

By Steve Schneider

Make Every Note Count

Locked within every hammered and mountain dulcimer is the potential for great beauty, excitement, and mystery. Many people, having heard that beauty, excitement, and mystery, are compelled to play the dulcimer. As with any musical instrument, developing fluency on the dulcimer requires a dedication to the art of practice coupled with a willingness to accept the challenges, joys, and discomforts of learning.

Below is a list of some of the salient features I believe might be important in unlocking the dulcimer's potential. This list is subjective, is not for everyone, and is hardly exhaustive, but I think there are some good ideas here. Many of these ideas I learned from wonderful music teachers, some I got from books, and the others became evident either through my own personal experiences as a player, student, performer, and teacher.

1 Tune every string. (This one is primarily for hammered players--I hope!) I have met many people who simply opt to not tune those pesky chromatic notes (the ones at the tippy top) on their hammered dulcimers. They argue that they probably won't play those notes anyway, and they never learned what notes they are, regardless. The fact is that when all the strings are not tuned, the dulcimer just doesn't sound good. Some of the beauty of the instrument comes from the vibration of the strings on the instrument that ring sympathetically as you play, and the dulcimer will just not sound right if it's not all in tune with itself. Another reason to tune all the strings is that it prepares you for the possibility of playing all of the notes on your instrument—you paid for all of them... you may as well use them. Also, you'll never be or feel quite fluent if you don't.

2 Learn the name of every string or fret on your dulcimer. When we become intimate with people or things, we learn their names. In this way, we have a reference point and a way to talk and think about them in an intelligent way. The same is true of the notes on your dulcimer. One way to accomplish this is to sing the notes as you practice all the major, minor, and chromatic scales and arpeggios available on your instrument. For mountain dulcimer players this includes learning what notes you have when using different tunings and when you capo different frets. This also helps with learning the pathways of different keys, which helps in everything from sightreading to improvising to composing.

"We must be the change we wish to see in the world. — Gandhi"

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3 Make every note count. Each note should be clear and distinct and beautiful, even in quick passages. In order to accomplish this, practice very slowly in order to train yourself to play with as little effort as possible. If you can't play it well slowly, then you certainly can't play it well quickly. Unlike human beings, not all notes are created equal. Depending upon where in the scale a particular note is will determine its relationship to the key you're in and, therefore, how it should be played. Knowing this helps the player to learn to emphasize those notes that need emphasis, and to de-emphasize all others.

4 Learn, practice, and play in phrases. Conceiving of music in phrases makes learning easier and adds expression to playing. Experiment with playing one phrase softer than the next and vice versa—this adds color to your playing and brings out different nuances in the music.

5 Learn to manipulate the elements of music. Musical fluency includes the ability to intentionally control and alter your tempo, dynamics, articulation, or key, among other things. You can practice this by choosing one element at a time and focusing on gaining control of it with scales and arpeggios or with a piece of music. If you play something in D, learn it in whatever other keys you have available to you on your dulcimer. Pay attention to the different pathways that your fingers or your hammers take with each different key.

6 Learn the patterns, pathways, or map of your dulcimer. The ability to play the dulcimer intuitively requires that you know your way all around your instrument. This includes the lowest and highest notes, becoming comfortable in whatever keys are available on your instrument, and learning or figuring out how to get from one note to the next as smoothly and effortlessly as possible. We have many choices to achieve similar ends on both dulcimers, and we should have options available to us when learning or playing.

7 Learn to read music, or improve your reading. Reading music opens up worlds to the player, especially one who can't get to play with others very often. You can learn tons of valuable stuff from reading music, and you can learn to play music that you might otherwise never get to hear. Reading music is much easier than reading English, so get the help you need in order to make it happen. I don't know anyone who could not learn to read music or who ever regretted learning to read music.

8 Perform. Performing gives you a way to share your music with others, gives you a deadline to learn something by, and it teaches you tons about what it means to be truly prepared, to really know a piece of music. Performing is a great teacher, and you can learn a lot about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses. Remember that each performance is the rehearsal for the next—with the right attitude you just get better and better. After each performance ask yourself how you could have done it better. Take notes, and practice performing either by yourself or with a hand-picked audience. Ask for and listen to feedback. Video yourself performing and constructively critique it. Never despair, never give up. You can always do it better, and you will if you work at it.

9 Don't fix. Learn to play through your mistakes, even when you're alone. Fixing mistakes, going back and re-doing a note or two, accomplishes nothing positive (since it just interrupts the flow of the music), and it simply reinforces the wrong notes. Don't do it. If you consistently play the same mistakes over and over, break the phrase down into smaller phrases, and play those notes within the context of the small phrase. When comfortable, add more phrases until you can play through it without a hitch.

10 Knowing a piece of music means being able to play it through, (at least) three times in a row, without hesitation or (many) mistakes. Give yourself a break, but really know that you know a piece of music before performing it (when possible).

11 Learn music theory and harmony. This can be invaluable in terms of gaining a deeper understanding of the music you play. The more you know about the inner workings of music the more powerful a musician you will be. The greater your musical understanding and fluency the more you will be able to successfully and artistically create arrangements, play expressively, compose, play backup, learn, teach, and enjoy your dulcimer.

12 Practice practice practice. Do whatever you need to do in order to practice regularly and effectively. There is no substitute for good practice, and the rewards

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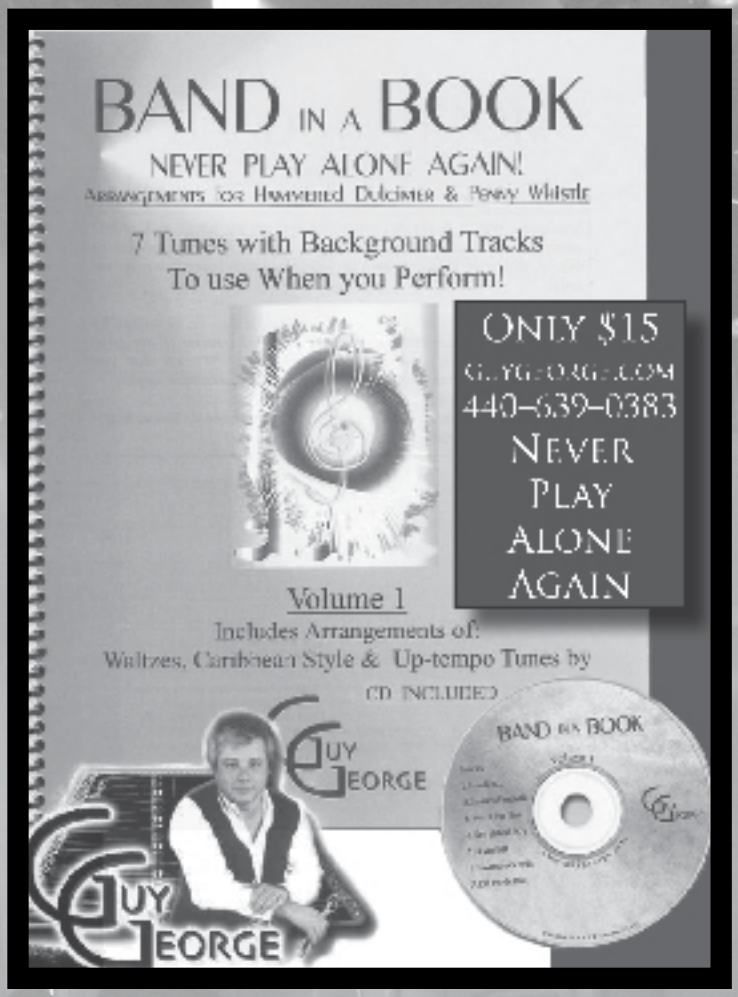
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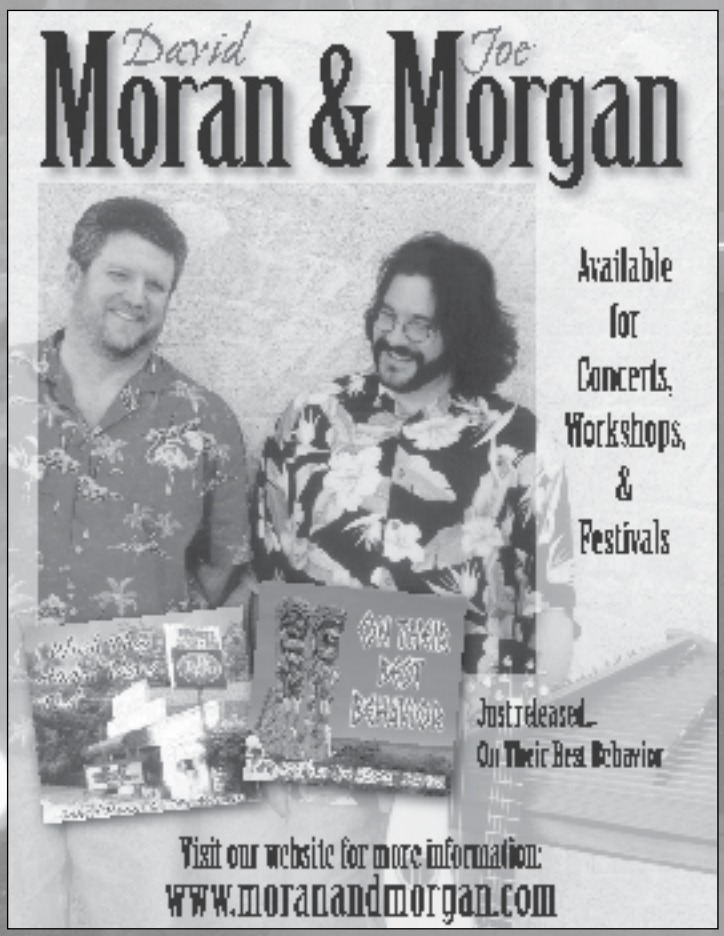
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continued from page 38

are vast. Fifteen minutes of good practice is a lifetime compared with not practicing at all. Learn to distinguish between practicing and playing. Practicing is a solitary behavior and involves lots of repetition of small parts of music, exercises, scales, and arpeggios. Playing involves playing through whole pieces of music for pleasure.

13 Find the right teacher. You and your teacher should mutually respect one another, and should also speak the same musical language and have similar goals. If you're not progressing, then something's not working, and it's up to you and your teacher to work together so that you can benefit from your lessons.

14 Listen to music, go to concerts, surround yourself with music, talk about music. Try to understand what it is about certain music or certain performers that you really like, or that you really don't like or understand. The more you can articulate your thoughts about music the more you'll understand your own musical strengths and weaknesses.

15 Achieve Beginner's Mind. It's fairly easy to become complacent about the music we make and to forget how beautiful the dulcimer really is when we play it. We become accustomed and numbed to our special and unique sound, and we can easily begin to take it for granted. Unfortunately, our music is also numbed when this occurs—working with beginner's mind helps to insure that our music always remains new and fresh.

Beginner's mind is a popularized concept from Zen practice that calls for maintaining the innocence of original inquiry in order to stay open to all possibility. This enables us to continue to be delighted in what we hear, in being able to hear something you've played over and over again always with a new set of ears. With beginner's mind we maintain our initial glow of excitement about playing the dulcimer, and we translate that into fresh energy for growing and improving as musicians. When in a state of true beginner's mind, we are always ready and open to learn, to understand without barriers, and to tackle new problems with a fresh, effective, and useful approach. We are all beginners. Every ending is a new start in beginner's mind, so let's begin. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at performance@steveschneider.com.

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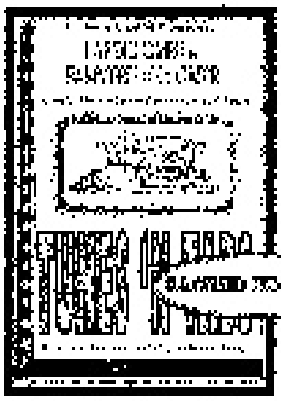

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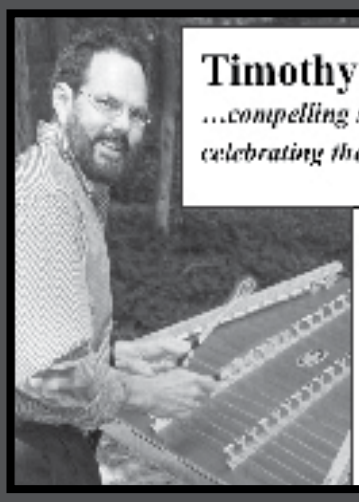

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Icy Rain

by Randy Clepper

When Mark Wade, Bob McMurray, Dan Landrum, and I decided to form the band "Hammer On!" we met in Tennessee at Dan's studio to make a CD, then all looked at each other and said, "Ok, now what are we going to record?" The dilemma sparked the group's creative juices, and led to the creation of a project of mostly original compositions. The resulting body of work reflects the band members' diverse backgrounds, drawing on styles from classical, jazz, celtic, bluegrass, pop/rock, old-time, etc.

One day I was noodling around with a tune I had started writing on the soprano hammered dulcimer when Mark Wade came in and said, "Oh, when I hear that, it puts me in mind of 'icy rain'." I replied, "Hmm, you mean 'sleet'?" "Yeah, ok, well maybe 'icy rain' sounds more evocative." We decided to arrange it for the band as a four-hammer-dulcimer piece. I played the melody on the soprano, Mark and Bob played harmony parts, and Dan played 'bass dulcimer' on his large Dusty Strings D600. We added a couple of guitar and bouzouki parts toward the end of the tune, and during performance Bob and I switch to these instruments mid-tune, then back to dulcimer.

On the next page is the basic melody for *Icy Rain.* The full score arranged for four hammer dulcimers is available for free download at www.dpnews.com/music.html, along with an mp3 of the tune from the *"Hammer On!"* CD. The melody also works well as a solo hammer dulcimer number – I sometimes perform it this way on a regular hammer dulcimer and simply repeat the entire melody once.

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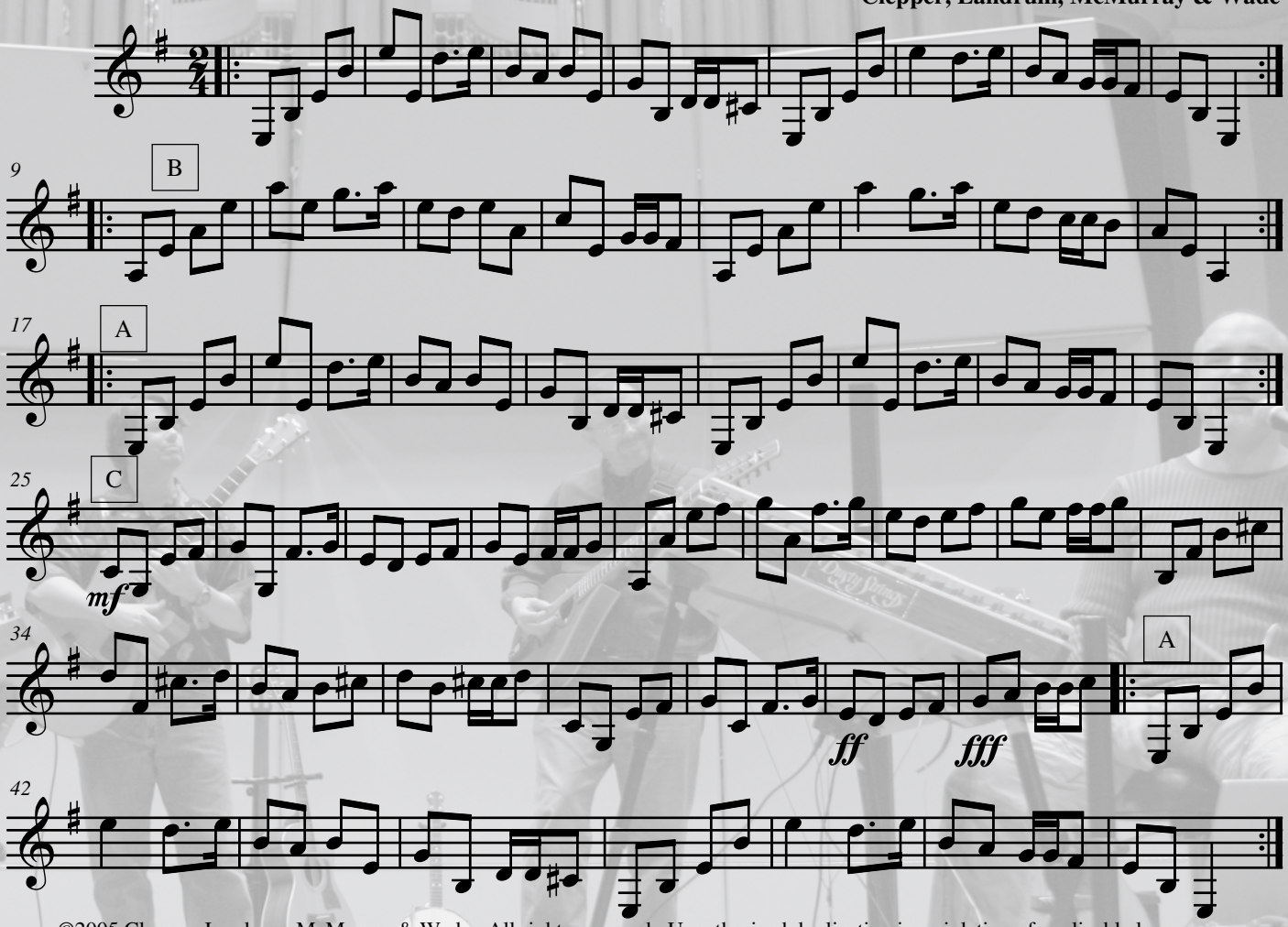
Icy Rain

from the "Hammer On!" CD

Clepper, Landrum, McMurray & Wade



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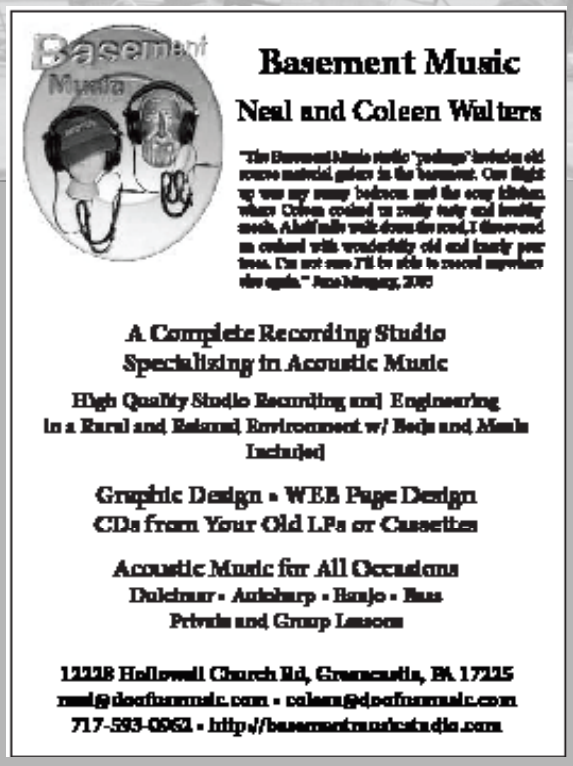

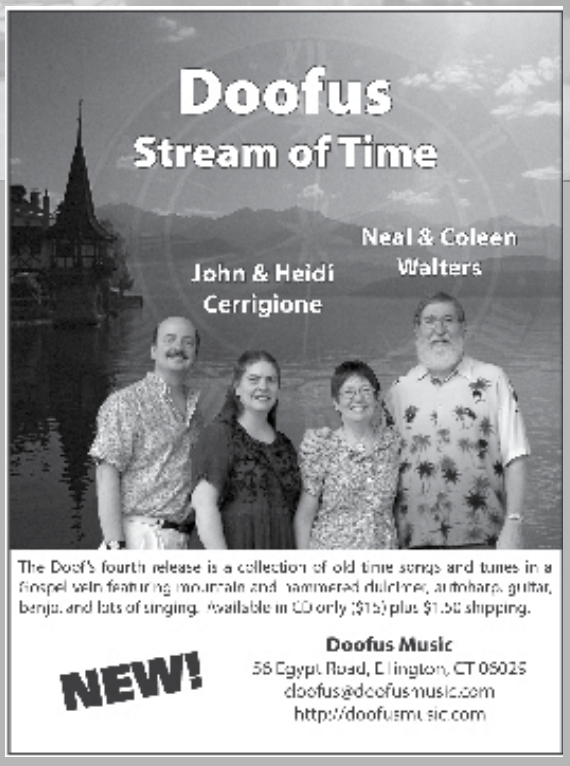

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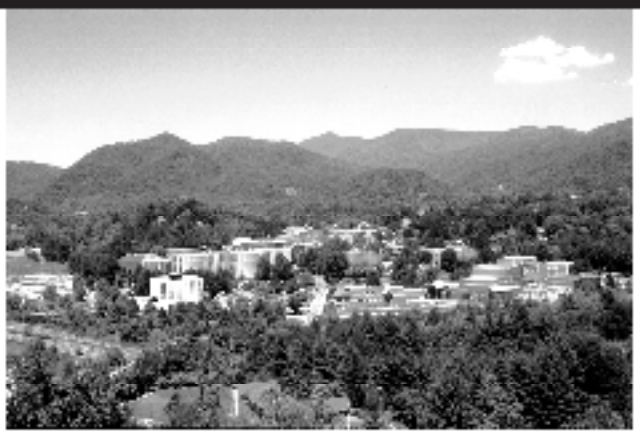

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Artist Profile - Moran & Morgan

By Linda Lowe Thompson

David Moran and Joe Morgan are a hammered dulcimer and guitar duo who began taking the world by storm in 1995. While both are well versed in the traditional fiddle tunes that many associate with the hammered dulcimer, M & M have expanded their musical vision to include music from a variety of sources.

When did you first see a dulcimer?

David: I saw a dulcimer for the first time back in the mid-to-late 70's at Silver Dollar City in Branson, MO.

Joe: September of 1980, the first time I went to the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas. They had a hammered dulcimer workshop on the schedule and my wife and I thought we would go see what a hammered dulcimer was. Cathy Barton was one of the people onstage, and I think John McCutcheon may have been there, too. That weekend was also the first time I heard Dana Hamilton play. He won the contest that year and played a tune on the main stage during the awards ceremony.

When did you first start playing music together, and was it an easy fit from the very beginning?

David: I think we first performed together in the fall of 1995. It was definitely an easy fit. For a long time all we did was traditional tunes, since that was a musical world with which we were both very comfortable.

After about two years, we started trying to play stuff we knew no other dulcimer/guitar duo would play. This led to some blues stuff, some jazz and pop standards, and whatever originals we've come up with. We both seem to have this twisted attraction to tunes that, at first glance, would seem impossible. But, as far as we're concerned, the more unlikely a tune is, the more likely we are to work it up.

Joe: It was fall of 1995 at a Farmer's Market where the dulcimer society was hosting an open mic night. David and I were both going to be there, and he took me up on my offer to back him up on a few tunes. A couple of months later he asked if I was interested in doing a few festivals with him. I said yes, and here we are ten years later. It was very comfortable from the

continued on page 50

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Date	Festival	Event Location	Electronic	Contact Address	Contact
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Three Rivers Dulcimer Society

By Rebecca S. Hoffman

Mountain dulcimers are not as well known out west as in other parts of the country, but Three Rivers Dulcimer Society has been helping to change that since we first got together in March of 2003. In the beginning it was one experienced player and one beginner. We then put a message in *Three Rivers Folklife Society* and folks started coming out of the woodwork! Our group continues to grow as people learn about us and hear us play.

Folks in our group play mainly Appalachian mountain dulcimers, but we also have hammered dulcimers, mandolins, fiddles, guitars, penny whistles, bodhrans, flute, Irish harp, harmonica, cello and bass. We welcome all acoustic instruments!

For the past four years we have participated in Tumbleweed Festival on Labor Day weekend sponsored by the Three Rivers Folklife Society. We host a workshop called "Jam in D," and invite all acoustic instrument players to participate.

Three Rivers Dulcimer Society, as well as our new small ensemble named Fine Fretted Friends, plays often at local events, such as garden parties, senior living facilities, art galleries, wineries, churches, and civic events.

Three Rivers Dulcimer Society hosted a day of workshops with Heidi Muller and Bob Webb in October 2005. Several of our group traveled to Sandy, Oregon, for "Spring Fling" in April 2006 where we had the great pleasure of meeting and working with Madeline MacNeil for a whole weekend. We hope to do more of this in the future. Meanwhile, several of us are very interested in the TAB available for mountain dulcimers, and we have purchased a lot of books, previewed them, and recommended some of them to our group. Several of us are subscribers to Larry Conger's lessons, too.

We host twice-monthly practice/jam sessions from October through May on the first and third Saturdays of every month from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The Benton Rural Electric Association generously loans us their Community Room from October to May, when we play inside. From May through September, we jam, weekly, at a local farmers' market.

For the first hour of our sessions, we focus on beginners and get them started on mountain dulcimer. After the more experienced players arrive, we just naturally have some conversation time. We not only share a love of musical instruments, but we also share an interest in each other. Once we settle in and get down to music making, we usually introduce a new piece of music. We use TAB most of the time, but some folks play by ear, and some tunes are now so familiar that they are memorized. We play all kinds of music, with American folk and Celtic music being favorites. We play mainly in the key of D, and also use the capo. For the rest of the jam, we go around the circle and give each player a chance to choose a tune.

The contact person for Three Rivers Dulcimer Society is Rebecca Hoffmann at rshoffmann@charter.net. Rebecca maintains an email list of players and sends out a jam reminder prior to each gathering. She also emails the group with other items of interest. Our club charges no fees and we have no officers. We all share the responsibilities and it seems to work very well.

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beginning. We both seem to have a feel for what the other guy is trying to do and I think it was there from the very first tune we played together.

What do you most enjoy about playing music together?

David: The thing I like best is that we are so much alike. We both like a ton of different kinds of music, and we don't take ourselves too seriously. Oh, and Joe's twisted sense of humor pretty much matches my own.

Joe: It's fun. We enjoy each other's company and have a great time, whether we're practicing or performing or coming up with new ideas for tunes or just hanging out doing nothing. I also enjoy seeing what David will come up with next. He's one of the most creative musicians I've ever seen and it's a real treat watching him work.

Linda: Your first CD, *I Wish They Hadn't Done That*, has a wide variety of music, from a Carolan-like air to a few original tunes to Floyd Kramer's *Last Date*.

How do you choose your music?

David: We usually brainstorm together. Most of the songs we've worked on have been by mutual agreement.

Joe: We can share the credit (or blame, depending on your point of view) for the music we play. I'd say the music on the CD was pretty evenly divided between tunes David had written or suggested and tunes I'd written or suggested. We figured out early on that we didn't want to play stuff that had already been covered quite a bit in the dulcimer world. We love fiddle tunes and traditional tunes, and will always play a couple in every set we do, but we've both had so many different musical influences that we wanted to see if we

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could bring some of those to the surface. Plus, our number-one goal is to get a laugh out of each other. One of the ways we've done that is by making outrageous suggestions for tunes we could play. Several of those "outrageous" suggestions have actually panned out. I think Dave mentioned *I Feel Good* while we were driving home from a festival at about two in the morning. We both had a good laugh, but he called me up a couple of days later and said he'd given it a try and thought we could make it work. One of the more recent "outrageous" things we've worked up is a song called *Basket Case* by the punk rock band Green Day. I'd heard it somewhere and, as a joke, suggested we give it a try. Well, we started fooling around with it and found out it not only would work, but it was a lot of fun to play. As it turns out, the chord progression is almost identical to Pachelbel's "*Canon in D.*" Go figure. All in all, we've been lucky that audiences enjoy hearing what we enjoy playing.

Does one of you ever veto any music the other suggests?

David: I think it has only happened once.....

Joe: Well, I keep trying it get Dave to play *Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves*, but he refuses to play along. Actually, there was one tune David suggested that I didn't want to play at all. But, every once in a while he would mention it again and now it sounds like a good idea. Just the other day I told him I'm ready to give it a shot. There have been a couple of times when one of us will suggest something and we'll give it a few tries, only to find out it's not terribly interesting for the other half of the duo. Those tunes seem to weed themselves out and drop off of the radar. It's important that we both like the music we play. If one of us is not really interested in a tune it will never work very well in performance.

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Linda: Not only do you both play with great technical skill and musicianship, but you bring a sense of fun to the stage that adds a great deal to the pleasure of the audience.

Are your combined senses of humor different than your individual ones?

David: Not really. We both quote lines from Mel Brooks movies 'til our wives complain; we both like Lester "Roadhog" Moran, Greater Tuna, Strange Brew. We don't agree on everything, but we do have a lot in common. We usually agree to disagree about politics, but we can both make fun of our own and each others' opinions without getting bent out of shape.

Joe: No. Our senses of humor are frighteningly similar. At least that's what our wives say. We're both slightly warped and that manages to come through when we're playing. That's one of the reasons we get along so well. That's also why we like playing music with people like Guy George and Scott Odena whenever we can. Scott's sense of humor is almost identical to ours, and Guy…Well, Guy is just nuts. But, when we can all get together onstage, we have a blast.

Linda: The new recording, *On Their Best Behavior*, is currently available and I'm really enjoying my copy. Its great graphics, excellent setlist and excellent performances will be as satisfying an addition to your music collection as *I Wish They Hadn't Done That.* I highly recommend them both.

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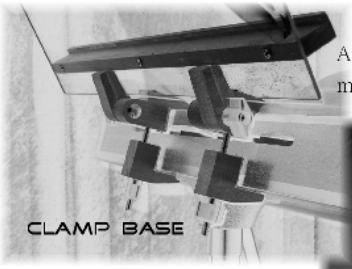

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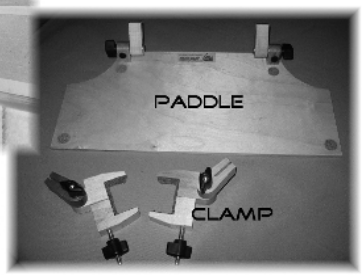

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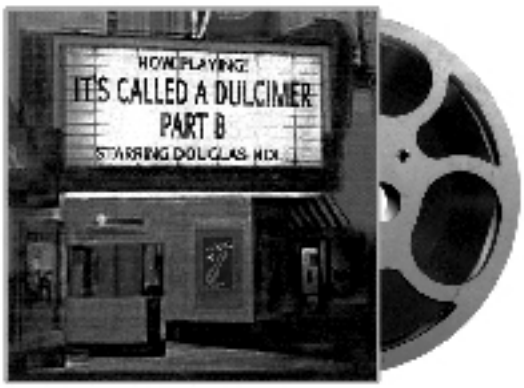

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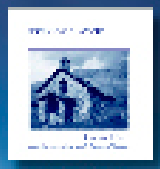

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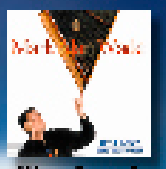

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